

# THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1894.

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## THE GREY MONK.

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DYKE."

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### CHAPTER XVIII.

#### THE FALSE HEIR.

SIR GILBERT CLARE'S deliberate announcement, evidently not made without a purpose, that the family estates were no longer entailed, was one which carried dismay to the heart of Captain Verinder. His face fell on the instant, and for a little while the ruddy colour faded out of his cheeks. Although aware that the baronet's eyes were glancing keenly from him to Giovanna, and then back, he could not for the life of him help showing that the blow had struck home.

Sir Gilbert smiled grimly to himself.

"As I thought, this fellow is at the bottom of the business," he murmured, but this time not aloud. "It is he who has found me out and induced his niece to lay her case before me, evidently in the expectation of being able to feather his nest out of her, or me, or both of us. Well, we shall see. As regards his niece, I am more than ever inclined to believe in her. The story she told me was remarkably clear and straightforward. But *festina lente* must still be my motto."

Then he rose. "And now, my dear madam," he said, addressing himself pointedly to Giovanna and wholly ignoring the Captain, "I must ask you to excuse me till to-morrow, when I shall expect to see you here, accompanied by your son, at the same hour as to-day. I would not have quitted you so abruptly but that I have a couple of my tenant farmers waiting all this time to see me about some repairs. But you must not leave the Chase without partaking of some refreshment. Pardon me if I insist. I cannot sit down with you myself, I

am sorry to say, for I am under the strictest dietetic regimen. They are terrible tyrants, these doctors. Till to-morrow at eleven, then."

Therewith he shook hands cordially with Giovanna, but the Captain he merely favoured with a curt nod, as it might be a nod of dismissal to one of his dependents; and, indeed, he had already made up his mind that he had seen quite enough of Captain Verinder.

Presently a servant appeared with a liberally appointed luncheon tray, at sight of which the Captain brightened visibly, for he was one of those men to whom the good things of the table never appeal in vain.

It was not till they were jogging back to the station in their fly, which had been kept waiting for them, that Giovanna said: "I am not sure that I quite got at the meaning of Sir Gilbert's speech about what he called the entail. Does it mean that— But perhaps you had better tell me what it does mean."

The Captain drew down the corners of his mouth. "Oh, there's no possible mistake about his meaning. It seems that your husband was so unspeakably foolish as, in return for the sum of six thousand pound, to deprive himself and his heirs of what otherwise would have been their undoubted birthright. Thus the estate of Withington Chase, and other estates into the bargain, for anything I know to the contrary, instead of descending through the law of entail to Sir Gilbert's grandson (whom we hope to have the pleasure of introducing to him to-morrow), have, as the result of that act, become the baronet's sole and personal property, to sell, or give away, or do what the dickens he likes with. I wish with all my heart that John Alexander Clare had been at the bottom of the Red Sea before putting his hand to any such iniquitous document."

"Then, if Sir Gilbert chooses to adopt Luigi as his grandson it does not follow that he will come into the property?"

"It certainly does not follow that he will; but neither does it follow that he won't. Everything hinges on how Sir Gilbert takes to him. If Luigi plays his cards skilfully, there's no reason why he should not come in for everything when the old gentleman dies. On the other hand, if he plays them badly, he may be left without a shilling."

"And the title?" queried Giovanna.

"Oh, the title can't be cut off as the entail has been. That descends to the next heir, whoever he may be, and nothing can deprive him of it. But where would be the good of the title, I should like to know, without the means to keep it up? It would be a white elephant—worse than useless. Everything depends on Luigi."

"He seems to me a rather clever young man."

"Oh yes, he's clever enough in his way," said the Captain with a short laugh. "The question is whether he's not a little bit too clever. There lies our danger."

This was rather beyond Giovanna; but, as their fly drew up next minute at the station, nothing more was said; and as there were several other passengers in the compartment by which they travelled up

to town, all further private conversation was deferred till they reached Giovanna's rooms, where they found Luigi impatiently awaiting their arrival.

The young Italian was a rank coward both morally and physically, and when told that he would have to face Sir Gilbert Clare on the morrow in his assumed *rôle* of grandson to the baronet, his cheeks blanched and a nervous trembling took possession of him, which was not allayed till the Captain had administered to him a tolerably stiff dose of brandy.

As already stated, Luigi was a fairly good-looking young man. He was tall and slender, with a pale olive complexion and clear cut features of an almost purely Greek type. His eyes were large, black and expressive, and the knowledge of how to make the most of them had come to him by intuition, as it does to the majority of his race. Jet black, soft and silky were his hair and moustache. He was very proud of his long tapering hands, and his carefully trimmed nails. Some of his friends said they were the hands of an artist, others, less complimentary, averred that he had the digits of a pickpocket. Both statements went beyond the mark, as the generality of extreme statements do, for although Luigi Rispani was a fairly clever drawing-master, he was entirely lacking in the creative faculty, and although he had no moral scruples whatever in lending himself to a scheme for defrauding Sir Gilbert Clare, nothing less than hard compulsion—a twinge of starvation, for instance—would have induced him to insert his hand into another man's pocket and abstract therefrom a watch or purse. In the opinion of some people a transaction of the latter kind would have been much more venial than the one to which he had given his assent, but such was not Luigi Rispani's way of thinking, and such is not the way of thinking of thousands of others.

Our three conspirators did not separate till a late hour, for, on the strength of his coming good fortune, Luigi had already thrown up his post at the theatre. As a matter of course, the Captain was spokesman-in-chief. He it was who thought out every detail and strove to foresee and provide against every contingency which might unexpectedly crop up at the morrow's interview. The others had little to do beyond listening and assenting and trying to fix in their memory, so that they might be available at the right moment, the different points enumerated by him.

In matters of business Captain Verinder was punctuality itself, and our little party of three pulled up at the door of Withington Chase as the turret clock was striking eleven. Having been ushered into the morning room as before, they were left to themselves for a few minutes. Then the footman reappeared with a request that "the lady and the young gentleman" would be good enough to follow him. Before quitting the room he rather ostentatiously placed a couple of newspapers on the centre table.

Captain Verinder was left alone; he realised the fact unpleasantly.

Starting to his feet, he began to pace the room with anything but placid strides. His face turned a purplish red, he shook his clenched hands at an imaginary foe, and anathematised Sir Gilbert in tones not loud but deep. He was quite aware that the baronet had conceived an unaccountable dislike for him, but he had not thought it would take a form of such active hostility as had now evinced itself. It was more than a slight—it was an insult—as he fumingly told himself: but all the same, it was one which he was not in a position to resent.

After all, as he assured himself when he had in some measure calmed down, it was really a matter of little moment, even if Sir Gilbert should continue to ignore him; he might feel sore at the time, but he would soon get over that. The great point was that the scheme he had so carefully elaborated was on the high road to success; the rest, as far as he was concerned, was a trifling matter indeed. Let but Luigi and Vanna attain to the positions he had designated them for, and henceforth with him—Augustus Verinder—all would go well. Farewell, then, to his existence of semi-genteel pauperism, and to his long struggle against a fate which had so persistently turned a cold shoulder to him, and would have none of his wooing! For the rest of his days he would be able to live as a gentleman ought to live.

On leaving the morning-room, Giovanna and Luigi were conducted to the library, where they found Sir Gilbert awaiting them. The baronet received them with that frigid ceremoniousness to which Giovanna was becoming accustomed by this time, but which did not tend to put Luigi more at his ease. But the mere fact of Sir Gilbert betraying no outward signs of perturbation afforded no gauge by which to measure the depth of the emotions at work below. All his life it had been natural to him to mask his feelings, and at his age it was not to be expected that he should alter. In reality, he was profoundly moved—a fact which increased, rather than diminished, the ingrained austerity of his manner, and deepened the vertical line between his shaggy eyebrows.

“Madam, I wish you a very good day,” he said, as he took Giovanna’s hand for a moment and bent over it. “You are punctuality itself—a commendable virtue in your sex! but one, unless they are somewhat belied, more honoured by them in the breach than the observance.”

Sir Gilbert’s banter, on the very rare occasions on which he condescended to indulge in it, was of a somewhat ponderous and old-fashioned kind. Not that he was in any bantering mood to-day—far from it; his only object was, by means of it, the more effectually to conceal the inward tremor which had seized him now the moment had come which was to give him a grandson to take the place of the son whom he had banished long years before.

For the moment Giovanna found nothing to say in reply. For the first time she seemed to realise the enormity of the fraud to



which she had lent herself, and the shame of it. But it was too late to go back even had she been willing to do so—which was doubtful : for it is no uncommon experience for a person to recognise to the full the blackness of any wrong-doing in which he or she may be engaged, and yet not to falter, or swerve for a moment from the line of action they have laid down for themselves.

"And this, madam, is the grandson whom you have brought from the kingdom of Nowhere to make me a present of," continued Sir Gilbert as he faced Luigi.

"This, sir, is your grandson, Lewis Clare," replied Giovanna in quiet measured tones.

"Lewis Clare!—why Lewis?" demanded the old man, turning quickly on her.

"It was the name his father chose for him. Was there not—pardon the question—a certain Colonel Lewis Clare, who lived a great number of years ago and who fell in battle?"

The baronet nodded.

"It was after him that my husband named the boy," added Giovanna, her black eyes looking Sir Gilbert unflinchingly in the face.

"He might have done worse—he might have done very much worse. It is a name to be proud of, madam."

Then he again faced Luigi, eyeing him critically and keenly.

"So, sir, I am given to understand that you have been brought up in England, consequently I presume that you speak the English language as well as I do."

"Scarcely that, I am afraid, sir," answered Luigi with a glint of his white teeth; "although I pride myself on being more of an Englishman than an Italian."

"Then you belie your looks," muttered the old man as he turned abruptly away. He was bitterly disappointed. His secret hope had been to find another Alec, in any case as far as looks were concerned; for of late years the memory of his eldest son (through a reactionary process by no means uncommon when one whom we have treated ill or unjustly is lost to us for ever) had become very dear to him. But in this olive-skinned, black-eyed stripling, with his facile smile and gleaming teeth, he could trace no single trait or feature which served to recall his dead son. Voice, looks, manner, all were radically different; there was no shadow of resemblance anywhere.

"Still, he is my grandson, and for Alec's sake——" he murmured brokenly under his breath. "It would be altogether unjust to blame the boy, or to treat him in any way differently for what, after all, is no fault of his."

He had turned to the table and was making a pretence of searching among the papers and books with which it was encumbered for something which he apparently failed to find. Behind his back Giovanna and Luigi exchanged glances of perplexity and dismay. Drawing himself up with a sort of half-shake, as if trying to free himself

from some harassing thought, and with a sigh meant for himself alone, Sir Gilbert again faced round.

"Pardon my remissness," he said with a little gesture of annoyance, on perceiving that both his visitors were still standing, "but it is not every day that one is presented with a grandson. Pray be seated," he added, and not till they had complied did he find a chair for himself.

He was evidently nonplussed what to say or do next. Although his disappointment was so extreme, and although he felt drawn towards Luigi by no frailest thread of affinity or kinship, he was sternly determined in his own mind that the fullest justice should be done to him, and that his position as the heir of Withington Chase should receive the amplest recognition both at his hands and those of the world at large. Perhaps—and who could say to the contrary?—liking would come in time. Perhaps, although it seemed hard to believe, the boy might gradually win his way to his grandfather's heart and become unspeakably dear to him.

"Your mother, young sir, tells me that for some time past you have been earning your living as a drawing-master," resumed Sir Gilbert when the silence had become painful to all three. He could not, just yet, bring himself to address his grandson after any more familiar or affectionate style.

"That is so, sir, and a very poor living I made of it."

"Ah—ha!" interjected Sir Gilbert, but whether by way of expressing approval, or disapproval, his hearers could not tell.

"You see, sir, there are so many drawing-masters not merely with more experience than I, but with more natural ability to begin with."

"Come now, that is well said, and becoming in a young fellow of your age: although, on the other hand, it is not perhaps advisable—more especially nowadays when everybody seems to make a point of blowing his or her special trumpet as loudly as possible—to underestimate yourself or treat yourself too diffidently. But tell me now, what you can do, or what you think you could do if the opportunity were afforded you. You have tastes, gifts, qualifications of some kind, I suppose?"

"If so, sir, they and I have hardly made acquaintance as yet. Both money and leisure have been such scarce commodities with me, and I have had to work so hard for my living that I suppose I hardly know myself as I really am, or perhaps I ought to say, as I should have been had the circumstances of my life been different."

"There is good sense in what you say. Your modesty becomes you."

Thanks to the Captain's coaching, it was evident that Luigi had already succeeded in creating a favourable impression.

"You have had no opportunity of learning to ride, or shoot, I suppose?" queried Sir Gilbert.

"None whatever, sir."

"Um—that's a pity! What about the classics? Have you any knowledge of Latin, or Greek?"

Luigi shook his head.

"Not the slightest, sir. Of course I know Italian as well as I know English, or better. French, too, I speak with some degree of fluency; but beyond that I am afraid you will find me nothing better than a rank duffer."

Sir Gilbert pricked up his ears.

"I hope you are not addicted to the use of slang, sir, as your last phrase would seem to imply," he said severely. "To me there are few things more detestable. Pray let me never hear any more of it."

Luigi was wise enough to refrain from replying. He simply coloured up and did his best to look ashamed.

Presently the baronet rose. It was a signal to which the others at once responded.

"To-day is Thursday," he said. "Come to me again at noon on Monday next. I have much to think of, many things to consider, but by that time I shall probably have arrived at some decision with regard to certain matters which materially concern all now present. Till then, good-bye."

As he held Giovanna's hand for a moment he said, "I am not aware there is any necessity for Captain Verinder's presence here again. Um—um—it is immensely kind of him to have interested himself as he has, but I should be sorry to put him to any further trouble in the affair." With his right hand grasping that of Luigi, he placed his left in kindly fashion on the young man's shoulder. "You and I, in all probability, will be much better acquainted by-and-by. In any case, I think I may safely say that the fault will rest with you if we are not."

No faintest suspicion clouded Sir Gilbert's mind that he was clasping the hand of an impostor.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### LUIGI ACKNOWLEDGED.

As on the previous day, luncheon was provided for the baronet's visitors, and, as before, they partook of it without his presence.

Giovanna, in her clear simple way, related to her uncle all that had passed—all except that last speech of Sir Gilbert, which she left to be told later on.

The Captain rubbed his hands gleefully.

"All has gone well so far, very well indeed," he said; "and now that the worst is over—by which I mean now that Luigi has been introduced to the old man and accepted by him as his grandson, as, from what you tell me, seems undoubtedly to be the case—now that

the most difficult part of our task has been successfully accomplished, I don't mind saying that I shall sleep more soundly to-night than I have for the last week or more."

"It seems to me that Sir Gilbert favoured me with a precious cool reception," said Luigi, in an aggrieved tone; "in fact it was enough to freeze one. And those eyes of his seemed to go right through me; I was never so nervous in my life. I wouldn't go through such a quarter of an hour again for a good deal."

"There will be no call for you to do so," replied the Captain. "As I said before, you have gone through the worst. You know now the kind of man he is, and must act accordingly. If you only knew how"—adding, to himself, "and were not so self-opinionated and conceited"—"you might lead Sir Gilbert anywhere with your little finger. In the case of such a man, you have only to fall in with his humours, or make believe to fall in with them, and you may do anything in reason with him."

"If I had but your head on my shoulders, uncle!" exclaimed Luigi, with a smile that had a spice of mockery in it.

"Or my brains in your numbskull," retorted the Captain. "Oh, the chance—the golden chance that is now yours! One can but hope that you will know how to make the best of it."

It seemed to Giovanna that the time had now come for making her uncle acquainted with what Sir Gilbert had said about him. The Captain pulled a wry face for a moment, and then broke into one of his short harsh laughs.

"What a cantankerous old shaver he is!" he exclaimed. "I was sure from the first that he had taken a dislike to me." Then laying a hand on his niece's arm, he added in a voice which had become suddenly grave: "It matters not a grain of salt in what light Sir Gilbert chooses to regard me, so long as you and Luigi—especially the boy—contrive to keep in his good graces. That is the only thing of any real consequence."

For the next few days Sir Gilbert felt thoroughly unsettled and out of sorts. His ordinary avocations seemed to have lost all interest for him; he was unable to fix his attention on anything outside the special current of his thoughts for more than a few minutes at a time. He shut himself up in his own room, a small apartment which opened out of the library, and even Everard Lisle was only admitted to the briefest possible audience each forenoon. His mental attitude at this time was a puzzle to himself. A wonderful thing had come to pass. One which, had an inkling of it been permitted him beforehand, he should have assured himself could not fail to fill his few remaining days with a happiness undreamt of, and almost too deep to find expression in words. A gift, the most precious of any he could have asked for (seeing that we cannot bring back our lost ones from the tomb), had been vouchsafed to him, yet, strange to say, he felt little or none of that elation which would have seemed the natural

outcome of such a state of affairs. Why was this, and to what cause was it attributable? He tried to look forward to the presence of his newly-found grandson as to something that would crown his life with a blessing, and to mentally picture their daily life together in time to come, but he derived no pleasure from the process; neither did the future, now that he looked at it with fresh eyes, as it were, take to itself any added brightness from the fact that a son of his son would succeed him when the time should have come for him to pass into the Silent Land.

"Is it that my heart is dead?" he sadly asked himself, "or is it because I am so old and have gone through so much, that only the ghost of either joy or sorrow will ever keep me company again? Or is it," he went on, "because in this youth who has so suddenly intruded himself into my life I can discern nothing that serves to recall his father to memory, nor any likeness, however vague, to any of my pictured ancestors in the long gallery—who are his ancestors also—that I seem in no way drawn towards him? I cannot tell why it is so. I only know that it is."

In one respect, however, he derived a certain amount of mordant satisfaction from the knowledge that he would now be followed by an heir in the direct line of descent. His detested kinsman, Colonel Eustace Clare, who, he felt sure, never missed a day without hoping it would bring the tidings of his death, would now, at what might be termed the eleventh hour, be baulked of his chance of succession to the title, even as the cutting off of the entail in years gone by had deprived him of all prospect of ever succeeding to the estates.

Monday at noon brought Giovanna and Luigi again to the Chase. Verinder had kept them company as far as Mapleford station, where they all alighted. It had been arranged that he should await, either their return, or the receipt of some message from them, at the railway hotel, it being impossible to say how long Sir Gilbert might choose to detain them. The Captain's impatience would not admit of his quietly awaiting their return in London.

If Sir Gilbert received his guests without any particular display of cordiality he yet greeted them with a grave and kindly courtesy which went far towards putting them at their ease. For the time the more brusque and imperious traits of his character failed to assert themselves: indeed, no stranger seeing him on this occasion only, would have as much as suspected their existence. To-day he kept the others company at luncheon, although all he partook of was a biscuit and a glass of Madeira. By special invitation Everard Lisle made a fourth at table.

When once Sir Gilbert had made up his mind to acknowledge Giovanna as his daughter-in-law, and Luigi as his grandson, he was not a man to stick at half measures. The acknowledgment should be full and complete, and Everard Lisle was the person he chose to whom first to communicate his intentions, with which purpose in

view he invited him to dine at the Chase on Sunday. It was as they sat together after dinner that Sir Gilbert broke his news.

"For the present I shall have the boy to live with me," he said. "I want us to become better acquainted. My daughter-in-law, if she chooses to do so, can take up her residence at Maylings, the family dower-house, although not used as such in my time, which has stood empty since old Miss Hopkins's death three years ago. Of course the news that my grandson and his mother have been received and acknowledged by me will very soon get noised abroad, and as you are likely, owing to your being at the Chase so much, to be appealed to on the point by a number of people, I want you to be in a position to confirm the accuracy of the report and to give it the stamp of verity. That all sorts of ridiculous stories will get about, originating in the fact of my grandson's and daughter-in-law's existence not having been made public till now, I do not doubt, but with any, or all, such inventions you need have nothing to do. We have simply to deal with the two or three plain facts of the case."

Thus it fell out that Everard Lisle was already prepared for the meeting on Monday. The baronet introduced him simply as "My secretary, Mr. Lisle."

As Luigi did not proffer his hand, Everard contented himself by bowing slightly. But Sir Gilbert did not fail to notice the omission.

"Where is your hand, sir?" he demanded of his pseudo grandson with a drawing together of his shaggy brows. "Let me tell you that, young as Mr. Lisle is, I hold him in the highest esteem and regard."

Luigi smilingly hastened to repair his oversight. He was quick-witted enough in some things. "A favourite, evidently," he said to himself with an almost imperceptible shrug. "I suppose it will be to my interest to keep in with this fellow for the present, but when it comes to my turn he shall very soon be presented with the order of his going."

It seemed to Lisle that the best thing he could do would be to draw young Clare into talk over luncheon and leave Sir Gilbert and Mrs. Clare to get on together as best they could. Luigi responded readily enough to Everard's advances, all he asked just then being to be left alone by his "grandfather," whom he still regarded with secret fear and trembling, the enormity of the fraud of which he had been guilty impressing itself far more unpleasantly on his consciousness when in the presence of the baronet than at any other time. Both the young men were careful to confine their talk to the merest generalities. Both of them were on their guard, neither of them could tell yet what his future relations towards the other might develop into.

As for the baronet, he proceeded to mount one of his antiquarian hobbies (it may have been of set purpose, and in order to save both Giovanna and himself the awkwardness of having to make talk about nothing in particular) and ambled on, apparently to the content of both himself and his listener. Nothing more was required of Mrs.



Clare than to look interested and to interject an occasional "Yes," or "No," or "Indeed," at the proper moment, all of which she did to perfection, although three-fourths of Sir Gilbert's monologue was clearly beyond her comprehension.

When luncheon was over, the baronet, turning to Everard, said : "Mr. Lisle, I want you to be good enough to conduct Mrs. Clare and my grandson over the house and grounds, and to show them everything worth seeing. Mrs. Burton will place herself at your disposal as far as the house is concerned, and you can impound Shotover to show you over the gardens, and so forth. For myself, I am sorry that the infirmities of age should have so far prevailed over me as to preclude me from undertaking a task which otherwise would have been one of unmixed pleasure. You will find me in the library when you have finished your peregrination : but there is no need whatever for you to hurry yourselves."

## CHAPTER XX.

### SIR GILBERT'S DECISION.

THE Mrs. Burton referred to by Sir Gilbert was housekeeper at the Chase, having held that position since the death of the second Lady Clare. She was a widow, middle-aged, thin, prim, and as upright as a dart, and was still able to pride herself on the slimness of her figure. Her manners pertained to what might be termed the severely genteel school. She was careful to impress upon everyone with whom she was brought into contact that she was "a lady by birth," but it was a statement which she evidently intended people to accept unfortified by any particulars of her parentage and early history, with regard to which, indeed, it was noticed that she was studiously reticent. Her peculiarities notwithstanding, she made an excellent housekeeper, and the baronet valued her accordingly.

It had not been often in the course of her uneventful existence that anyone had succeeded in more than faintly stirring the chilly shallows of Mrs. Burton's gentility, but this morning she had been more nearly startled out of her propriety than had happened to her since her advent at Withington Chase.

Sir Gilbert had sent for her immediately after breakfast, and without a word of preface, and with no more apparent concern than if he were giving his orders about dinner, had said :

"Mrs. Burton, I am expecting two people to luncheon to-day whom you have never yet seen, and probably never as much as heard of. They are my daughter-in-law and my grandson. After luncheon I should like them to be shown by you over the house. Mr. Lisle will accompany them in my place. So if you will kindly hold yourself in readiness and meanwhile give orders for the shutters of the unused

rooms to be thrown open, and for an article or two of furniture here and there to be uncovered, I shall feel obliged."

Mrs. Burton had issued the requisite orders and had then shut herself up in her room to think over the astounding news which had just been told her, while endeavouring to regain her much-disturbed equanimity. She was one of those women who seem to have a special faculty for ferreting out every particular, or incident of consequence in the career of anyone in whom they are interested, and she had flattered herself that there was no fact of any moment in the life of Sir Gilbert with which she was not already acquainted. To-day, however, he had proved to her how egregiously she had been mistaken. A daughter-in-law and a grandson, and she, Felicia Burton, not to have known of their existence! She felt as if Sir Gilbert had put a grievous personal affront upon her.

But she was her usual prim, precise, close-lipped self when in her dress of black satin, a heavy gold chain round her neck, her faded hair crowned with a tasteful lace cap, and carrying a bunch of highly polished keys, she proceeded to show the little party over what might be termed the state apartments of the old mansion, not one of which had been entered by Sir Gilbert since his second wife's death. From room to room they went in leisurely fashion—the large drawing-room, the small ditto, "my lady's boudoir," the state dining-room, and so on, taking each in turn; and then upstairs, where a couple of the "best bedrooms" invited inspection—each and all being denuded of carpets and curtains, and of everything except its own special suite of furniture. Still, no great exercise of the imagination was needed to picture what those spacious and stately apartments must at one time have looked like, nor what they might very easily be made to look like again. Last of all they came to the picture-gallery, where the housekeeper, with an elaborate courtesy and a thin acid smile, took her leave.

"What a rummy old card!" was Luigi's outspoken comment almost before her back was turned.

"Lewis, how can you speak of her in that way?" exclaimed Giovanna.

"To me she has something of the air of a broken-down duchess."

"As if you had ever seen a broken-down duchess, mother!" retorted the young man flippantly.

"Mrs. Burton is a lady by birth—at least, so she gives everyone to understand," remarked Everard drily. "And now, Mr. Clare, here we are among the painted effigies of your ancestors. I have already made the acquaintance of most of them, as far as it is possible for a man still in the flesh to do so. Would you like me to introduce you to any of them?"

"N—no, I think not. Fact is, I don't care a rap about the whole boiling of 'em."

"Idiot!" hissed Giovanna in his ear. Then turning to Everard with a smile, she said:

"I am afraid my son is falling into an absurd habit—sadly too common among the young men of to-day—of depreciating things which they really understand and care about, although they won't admit it. One day I must show you some of Lewis's drawings and water-colours. He has done nothing in oils as yet, I believe. I fancy they will rather surprise you."

"What rubbish you talk, mother!" exclaimed Luigi.

"By the way," continued Mrs. Clare without heeding him, "if among these portraits there is one of my son's namesake, the Colonel Lewis Clare who was killed in battle, I should certainly like to have it pointed out to me."

Luigi yawned openly.

"I am sorry not to be able to gratify your wish," responded Lisle. "No portrait of Colonel Clare is known to be in existence."

From the gallery they made their way by a side door into the grounds, where Shotover, the gardener, was awaiting them.

Among other things at the Chase which had suffered from neglect since Lady Clare's death, owing to Sir Gilbert's penurious style of living, were the gardens and glass-houses, for whereas Shotover had formerly had four able-bodied assistants under him, himself and a youth had now to attend to everything. As a consequence, many things had to be left undone, or only half done, much to the old fellow's disgust. To-day, however, a whisper had reached him that the young gentleman whom he was presently to show over the grounds was none other than his master's grandson and heir—although where he had so suddenly sprung from nobody seemed to know—and he determined to turn the opportunity to account in the way of pointing out the difference between past and present as far as his department was concerned, in the hope that his doing so might be the means before long of bringing about a more desirable state of affairs.

It was by no means displeasing to Luigi to be addressed by Shotover in such deferential terms, and to be appealed to almost as if he were already master of everything he saw around him. In return he put on a very gracious and affable demeanour, which secretly tickled Lisle even while it annoyed him, and agreed with Shotover that matters were in a very bad way indeed, and that he would not fail to bear in mind all that he had seen and heard while they had been together. He had already decided in his own mind upon several alterations and improvements originating in certain hints skilfully thrown out by the old man.

But all his new-found sense of self-importance vanished the moment he found himself back in Sir Gilbert's presence. He could not have told himself why it should be so, but the fact was that under the baronet's keen and penetrating gaze he seemed to shrink and wither, to have, as it were, every rag of self-deception stripped off him and made to recognise himself for the sorry scamp and swindler that he was. Small wonder that he felt he would rather be anywhere than in

the company of his "grandfather." Had he had to deal with almost any other kind of man he would have tried to curry favour by fawning and flattery, but something told him that in the present case such a course would be about the worst he could adopt. He tried to console himself with the hope that when he should have seen more of Sir Gilbert, and so have become more accustomed to his presence, this very disagreeable feeling would gradually wear itself away.

Lisle having some outdoor business to attend to left the others at the door of the library and went his way. Mrs. Clare's stately beauty had not failed to impress him. He had found her somewhat reserved, and, while listening with apparent interest to all he had to say, originating few remarks of her own. He had, however, judged this reticence to be natural to her and not merely put on as a cloak for the occasion; and, in so thinking, he was not very wide of the mark, for at no time had Giovanna been a talkative woman, and now that she found herself in a sphere so new and strange it seemed to her that, for the present at all events, her wisest course was to listen to everyone and say as little as possible in return, and by so doing afford others no opportunity of gauging the depths of her ignorance.

Lisle found himself somewhat at sea when it came to a question of summing up Luigi. Sir Gilbert had furnished him with no information as to how and where the young man had been brought up, and, in lack of some such data, he felt as if he were floundering in the dark. Lewis Clare spoke English with the ease and fluency of one to the manner born, even to the point, judging from certain of his remarks, of being an adept in slang. That he was not a gentleman in himself was certain, and it was equally certain that he lacked the indefinable *cachet* of one who has been in the habit of mixing in good society. Yet it would be perhaps scarcely correct to call him vulgar, using the term in its commoner acceptation. "None the less, he's a conceited, ignorant young puppy," concluded Lisle, "and the chances are that, with a free hand given him, he will develop by-and-by into something still more objectionable. Where has he sprung from, I wonder? and for what reason has he been kept in the background all these years? Can it have been that Sir Gilbert himself had no knowledge till lately of the existence of such a descendant?"

But these were vain questions, as Everard Lisle was well aware.

"And now," said Sir Gilbert after he had put a few questions, chiefly to Giovanna, on her and Luigi's return from their round—"and now the time has come for me to enlighten you with regard to my intentions—that is to say, as far as they have reference to the present state of affairs. In what way I may see fit in time to come to change, modify, or even to wholly cancel the arrangements I now propose to make it is of course impossible for me even to conjecture. As for you, young sir," turning to Luigi, "you will, for the present, take up your quarters here. There are certain acquirements to which you

have hitherto had no opportunity of devoting yourself, but without at least a smattering of which no gentleman's education can be considered complete. You are not too old to learn, and I shall look to you to do your utmost, under proper tuition and surveillance, to remedy the defects in question. I shall, of course, make you a certain money allowance, the amount of which I have not yet determined, but I tell you at once that although it will, in my opinion, be amply sufficient to meet the unavoidable *menus frais* of a person in your position, it will not admit of your launching into any extravagances or unnecessary expenses. And now one word of caution. See to it that on no account you allow yourself to become involved in debt. That is one of the few things I should find it difficult to overlook."

Poor Luigi felt as if his heart were on the point of sinking into his boots.

Without waiting for a word in reply the baronet turned to Giovanna.

"What I have to propose, my dear madam, for your acceptance as the widow of my eldest son, is an allowance of four hundred pounds per annum to be paid you quarterly in advance. I am also in a position to place at your service, of course rent-free, a certain house known as Maylings, which belongs to me and is at the present time unoccupied. It is old-fashioned, but roomy and comfortable, and stands in its own plot of ground at the north-east corner of the park. Should you decide upon occupying it, I shall at once issue instructions to have it fitted up out of the spare furniture at the Chase. What say you, madam, what say you?"

It is not needful to record what Giovanna said. It was brief, but to the purpose. The baronet, who hated wordiness, although a little given to indulge in it himself on occasion, was evidently well pleased at the way she expressed herself. It was a matter of course that she should accept Maylings as her future home, although with certain unspoken reservations which, however, concerned no one but herself.

Luigi and she stayed to dinner, the hour for which at the Chase was the primitive one of five. Before leaving it was arranged that they should return on the Thursday following, Luigi to remain *en permanence*, and Giovanna to make the Chase her home till Maylings should be ready to receive her. Sir Gilbert did not fail to present her with a cheque for her first quarter's allowance. To Luigi he gave one for fifty pounds, together with a note to his tailor, in order that the young man might be enabled to furnish himself with an outfit such as became the grandson of Sir Gilbert Clare and the heir of Withington Chase. His last words as he held Luigi's hand for a moment at parting were—

"My boy, as you behave to me, so will you find that I shall behave to you."

## CHAPTER XXI.

## AFFAIRS AT ST. OSWYTH'S.

LEAVING Giovanna and Luigi to establish themselves in their new home and accustom themselves, so far as they may be able, to that changed condition of life to which the success of Captain Verinder's nefarious scheme has elevated them, we will hie back awhile to St. Oswyth's and ascertain how fortune has been dealing with our friends in that pleasant little town since we parted from them last.

When Mrs. Lisle, in one of her letters, informed her son that, owing to the loss of the greater part of their fortune the Miss Thursbys had been compelled to give up Vale View House and remove to an inexpensive cottage in the suburbs, she stated no more than the simple fact. Through the rascality of their agent, whose misdeeds had not been brought to light till he was beyond the reach of earthly reckoning, the sisters had lost the greater part of their property past all hope of recovery. All they had left was a somewhat fluctuating income, derivable from railway stock, which brought them in about two hundred a year. To this would be added the rental derivable from Vale View, which was their own property, as soon as a tenant should be found for it; for the present, however, it was standing empty. A matter of something over a hundred pounds had accrued to them from the sale of their surplus furniture and such other things as they no longer had a use for. More than all, they had felt the parting from Flossie, their gentle, steady-going old pony, but they had the consolation of knowing that in Mrs. Rudd it had found a mistress who would treat it with no less kindness than they had done.

It had been generally supposed among their friends and acquaintances, in view of their simple and unostentatious mode of life, that the sisters must have a few snug thousands—the result of their savings through a long course of years—put away somewhere: but such a supposition was wholly at variance with fact. In the belief that their income was as safe as the Bank of England, the sisters had never deemed it necessary to put by any portion of it, but had disbursed every shilling of whatever surplus was left in secret charity.

It was a matter of course that Tamsin should cling to them in their fallen fortunes, and accompany them to their new home. For the future she, and a young maid-servant, would be the only domestics whom they would be able to keep. But Tamsin, although heretofore her position had merely been that of maid to the sisters, had had the advantage of a sound bringing-up at home, and in days gone by had often lamented that sundry of her domestic acquirements had no scope for their exercise. Now, however, she would be able to prove both her skill as a cook and her deftness as parlourmaid, and all the housewifely gifts on which she secretly prided herself would have an oppor-



tunity of being brought into play. At length she felt that she was in her proper element.

As for the sisters, their sudden reverse of fortune was powerless to sour them or change them in any way. They remained just the same sweet and gracious ladies they had always been; and if such a thing were possible, they were beloved and respected more than ever by all who had the happiness of counting them among their friends. Their chief regret arose from the fact that they were no longer in a position to dispense their charities on the same scale as before.

The cottage to which they had removed—known as *Rose Mount*—made a pleasant little home, and its seven or eight rooms were amply sufficient for their changed needs. It stood on a sunny slope fronting the south, where flowers of a score different kinds—especially the one from which the cottage took its name—grew and blossomed to perfection. The thick hedge of evergreens which divided it from the high-road imparted to it that air of privacy and seclusion which the sisters loved.

With Ethel, meanwhile, affairs had by no means been at a standstill.

Day succeeded day till they had merged into weeks after Launce Keymer's sudden departure from *St. Oswyth's*, and still Ethel looked in vain for a letter or a message of some kind from him. She had no knowledge of his whereabouts, and however extreme her desire might be to communicate with him, she felt that only as a last resource could she prevail upon herself to ask for information from her lover's father. For one thing, she was by no means sure that Launce had broken the news of their engagement to Mr. Keymer senior. There had certainly been nothing in the note which the brewer wrote to Miss Thursby to indicate that such was the case. She was powerless to move.

Her aunts, even while in the midst of their own more personal anxieties, did not fail to sympathise with her over a state of affairs which was as much a puzzle to them as it was to her. Equally with Ethel, they felt that it was out of the question that they should ask the elder Mr. Keymer for an explanation of his son's silence, more especially now that their drop from affluence to comparative penury was a fact known to everybody. Could it be possible, they asked each other, that the fact in question had any bearing on Launce Keymer's mysterious silence? Had he merely engaged himself to Ethel in the expectation that, as her aunts' heiress, he would secure a rich wife for himself? and now, when he found his expectations dashed to the ground, was he so incredibly base as to want to break faith with her? These were questions which, although the sisters could not help putting, they shrank from any endeavour to find an answer to them. It was a hard matter at all times for them to think ill of anyone, and they recoiled especially from doing so in the present case. Not for the world would they have whispered a word

to Ethel which would have seemed to cast the faintest shadow of suspicion on her lover's truth and constancy.

As the reader will have already surmised, the news that the ladies of Vale View had undoubtedly lost the greater part of their money was not long in being conveyed to the elder Keymer by his cousin, Mr. Tuttle, clerk to Mr. Linaway the lawyer, the latter, as it may be remembered, having been employed by the sisters to draw up their wills and look after their business matters generally. To Mr. Linaway they had gone the day following the receipt of the letter which Launce Keymer had been allowed to read on that memorable evening when he was received at Vale View as Ethel's acknowledged lover.

Keymer senior had at once communicated with his son, and as they were both agreed that the affair, as between the latter and Ethel, must at once be nipped in the bud, it had been deemed advisable that Launce should stay where he was for the present. As far as was known, the sisters had not spoken of the engagement to anyone, and by-and-by he would be able to come back and brazen out the affair with impunity.

But there was one person who had by no means forgiven Launce Keymer's treachery towards her, and had made up her mind to be revenged upon him in one way or another. The person in question was Miss Hetty Blair, the pretty governess at Dulminster, whose work-box Keymer had rifled of the letters he himself had written her.

On discovering her loss Hetty had at once leaped to the very natural conclusion that her whilom lover had deserted her, and repossessed himself of his letters in consequence of his having forsaken her for someone else. The question that at once put itself to her was, as to the means by which it would be possible to find out who that someone was. Jealousy, and a determination to be revenged on her perfidious lover, worked very powerfully within her. She was by no means the kind of young woman to sit down helplessly under so foul a wrong and content herself with bemoaning her fate and shedding an infinitude of tears. She had really loved Keymer, and the blow he had aimed at her was such as she could neither forgive nor forget, and not till she should have succeeded in returning it with interest would she rest satisfied.

Her first step, despite her mother's protests, was to quit Dulminster and take lodgings in St. Oswyth's in a back street within a stone's throw of Keymer's home. She was not long ascertaining that Launce had left the town only a couple of days after his theft of the letters, but that no one, unless it were his father, knew either where he had gone, or the business which had taken him away. Neither did all Hetty's inquiries, perseveringly as she conducted them, tend to enlighten her on the one point about which she was more anxious than any other. If Launce were engaged to any young lady at St. Oswyth's, no one there seemed to know of it. That at various times

he had flirted more or less desperately with half a score of damsels was not open to dispute ; but there matters had ended, and not even the whisper of an engagement reached Hetty from anywhere.

In such a state of affairs it was only natural that she should ask herself whether Keymer, unknown to his friends and acquaintances, might not have left home on purpose to marry someone at a distance, and might not, at that very time, be on his bridal tour. It was a tormenting thought, and one of which Hetty could by no means disabuse her mind.

Anyone less persevering or less determined to leave no stone unturned in the task she had set herself would have gone back home disheartened, and have done her utmost to forget that anyone so unspeakably mean as Launce Keymer had proved himself to be should ever have beguiled her into loving him. But Miss Hetty was made of different stuff. She knew that Keymer could not stay away for ever. It might be months, perhaps even a year, before he returned. But that he would return she felt little doubt, and should he then bring with him a wife—well, in that case, let him look to himself! Meanwhile she would stay on where she was.

It was as well for the success of her purpose that she decided to do so. Among others whose acquaintance she had succeeded in making since her arrival at St. Oswyth's was the nursery governess at Mr. Keymer's (for the brewer's youngest child by his second marriage was as yet but seven years old), who, like herself, belonged to Dulminster, a fact which Hetty put forward as a sort of bond to draw them together. The result was that they met frequently when Miss Doris Lane was out with her youthful charge, and had many confidential gossips together in which, however, Hetty's part was more that of listener than talker. Thus by degrees she learnt more about Launce and his "carryings on" than she had ever known before, and it was by no means a flattering portrait which the governess sketched for her. Still, all this in no way served to advance the object Hetty had in view, seeing that Doris, no more than others, was in a position to point to any young lady as being Launce Keymer's *fiancée*, although in their talks together Hetty recurred again and again to that particular topic.

At length Doris said one day with a touch of impatience :

"Why are you for ever asking me whether I am sure Mr. Launce is not engaged to somebody? It's enough to make one fancy that you are fishing for him yourself."

Then Hetty took a sudden resolution. From what she had seen of Doris she thought she might be trusted, and in any case the time had come when it seemed better to risk telling her secret, if by so doing anything could be gained, rather than go on from day to day in utter ignorance of that which she was burning to discover.

"It is not because I am fishing for Launce Keymer," she said, "but because till a few weeks ago he was my promised husband, and

because it ended in his treating me like the scoundrel he is, that I want to know whether he has flung me aside in order that he may engage himself to someone else."

Doris gasped and opened her eyes to their widest extent, and for a few moments could find nothing to say.

Then presently Hetty went on to tell of the loss of her letters and the means by which it had been accomplished. This sent Doris's indignation up to boiling-point, which thereupon proceeded to vent itself in certain expressions which, as referring to himself, Launce Keymer would scarcely have cared to listen to.

Miss Lane's sympathy and outspoken indignation were sweet to Hetty, who had often longed for a confidant to whom she could open her mind. "And yet now I've told her, she can help me no more than she could before," she said to herself with a sigh. But in so saying she was mistaken, as was presently to be proved.

A sudden thought seemed to strike Doris.

"How stupid I must be," she said, "not to have recollected before (though, mind you, even now I don't know that it's a matter of any consequence), that Mary Deane, the housemaid, when she was brushing and arranging some clothes which Mr. Launce had left behind him, found the photo of a young lady in one of the pockets of his overcoat. Mary dropped it in my room as she was dusting, and then told me all about it, and went and put it back where she had found it. Now do you think——"

Here Doris stopped and looked inquiringly at Hetty.

"It does not matter what I think," replied the latter, "but you will be doing me a very great service indeed if you can obtain possession of the likeness and entrust it to me for one day. The next it shall be given back to you safe and sound. Will you do this for me?"

Doris would have done more than that had more been required of her, so worked upon had her feelings been by the tale told her by the other. At their next meeting the likeness was produced and handed over to Hetty.

"It's a sweet face, don't you think?" asked Doris, as Hetty stood gazing at the photograph with bent brows.

"It's a beautiful face," she replied, "and if Launce Keymer gave me up because he had the chance of winning this girl for his wife, I can hardly wonder at it. But he need not have robbed me of my letters."

She bit her lip in an effort to keep back the tears which had sprung to her eyes.

On turning the portrait over she saw that it bore the name of a local photographer. This was so far fortunate for the purpose she had in view, although had it borne a London or even a Paris address she would have carried out her scheme in exactly the same way.

Turning to Doris she said:

"I will leave you now and meet you again in half an hour, when I will give you back the likeness."

In the course of the afternoon of next day Miss Blair knocked at the door of Rose Mount and asked to see Miss Ethel Thursby. She had experienced no difficulty in obtaining the latter's name and address from the photographer who had taken the likeness. Hetty having been shown into the tiny drawing-room by Tamsin, was presently joined by Ethel, who could not help wondering as to the nature of the business which had caused her to be sought out by a perfect stranger.

Her visitor did not leave her long in doubt.

"My name is Hetty Blair," she began, "my home is at Dulminster, and I earn my living as a daily governess. And now, Miss Thursby, will you please to pardon the question I am about to ask you, which is: Do you happen to be acquainted with a person of the name of Mr. Launce Keymer?"

On the instant a lovely flush suffused Ethel's cheeks, which was not mitigated by the fact that Miss Blair was looking at her with parted lips and eagerly anxious eyes. She felt indignant with herself at having been surprised into a display of so much emotion and perhaps a little indignant with her questioner. She had not failed to notice that Miss Blair employed the word "person" in her mention of Keymer.

"The gentleman you speak of is my friend," she replied with a touch of hauteur, "although I am at a loss to know in what way that fact concerns you, or why——"

"I have presumed to come here and question you about him. That you will learn presently. Mr. Launce Keymer being, as you say, your friend, did he ever take you so far into his confidence as to tell you that he had engaged himself by a solemn promise to marry someone else?"

The colour vanished from Ethel's face, leaving it of a deathlike pallor. There was a little space of silence which to both the girls was fraught with pain. Then Ethel said faintly:

"No, Mr. Keymer never told me that."

"I thought not," answered Hetty, quietly. "Miss Thursby, I am the someone—I, humble Hetty Blair, nursery governess, whom Launce Keymer promised to make his wife."

"I cannot believe it," came from Ethel, but her words lacked the accent of conviction.

"It is hard to believe, is it not, that any man should be such a villain? But, for all that, it's the simple truth, as I can prove in a way which even you will find it impossible to dispute. If you will allow me, I will sit down, for the truth is I shake like an aspen."

"Pray pardon my forgetfulness," said Ethel, and with that she seated herself on a sofa a little distance away.

"I think he must have been fond of me at one time, or he would never have written me the letters he did," resumed Hetty presently. Ethel's eyes were fixed intently on her. She sat leaning a little

forward, her hands with tightly interlocked fingers resting on her lap. At the word "letters" she could not repress a start.

"Though I began to suspect latterly," continued Hetty, "that he was no longer quite as fond of me as he used to be, I did not doubt his love, and, least of all, did I think he would behave to me as only a scoundrel could behave. I had a number of letters from him at different times—eight in all. He used to go over to Dulminster twice a week to see me. He knew where I kept the letters—in a little work-box which stood on the sideboard in my mother's parlour where we used to sit together. Well, one afternoon, when he knew I was from home, he came to the house, and having sent my mother out on an errand, while she was gone, he broke open my work-box and stole my letters—that is to say, his letters to me; and from that day to this I have never set eyes on him, nor heard from him in any way. And the man who did that was Mr. Launce Keymer."

Ethel sat as one bereft of speech. It was as if the tides of her physical life had been arrested in full flow and sent surging back to overwhelm heart and brain alike, only to be released a few moments later and let go madly on their way. As yet but one coherent thought could frame itself in her mind: "And this is the man whose promised wife I am!"

Then she became conscious that Hetty was speaking again.

"I told you just now, Miss Thursby, that I had eight letters in all from him, but there were only six in the work-box when he rifled it. The remaining two were in a drawer in my bedroom. I have brought them with me to-day for you to read if you would like to do so."

"Not for worlds!" gasped Ethel.

"You are quite welcome to do so. You would then see for yourself how he used to write of me as his 'darling Hetty,' and his 'sweet little wife that is to be.' What wretches some men are, to be sure!"

Ethel found herself automatically counting her heart beats—"one, two—one, two—one, two." She was faint and dizzy.

Hetty was regarding her with eyes that were blurred with tears.

After a little, Ethel's dizziness passed. Bending her gaze on Hetty, she said:

"But what induced you to seek *me* out—that is to say, me rather than anyone else—and tell me all this about Mr. Keymer?"

"It was because I found out by accident that he was in the habit of carrying your likeness about with him, and I knew he was not the kind of man to do that unless——"

Ethel held up her hand. "That is enough," she said softly.

*(To be continued.)*





## LAW AND LAUGHTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH  
MARRIED."

PERHAPS it is because law seems rather alien to laughter, and a law court the last place where one expects to be merry, that a joke goes so far with, and is made so much of by, all who are connected with the legal profession. With the assistance of 'A Book About Lawyers' and other sources of information we shall give a few specimens of legal mirth arranged under three heads: first, the smart sayings of lawyers to each other; secondly, those of barristers and judges to witnesses and juries; and thirdly, the quite as good answers which these gentlemen have sometimes received.

Sir Nicholas Bacon, who was chancellor in the reign of Elizabeth, seems to have fully agreed with Lord Lyndhurst, that one of the chief duties of a judge is to render it disagreeable to counsel to talk nonsense. Once a loquacious barrister was checked in a course of pert talkativeness by this remark from the stammering Lord Keeper: "There is a difference between you and me—for me it is a pain to s—speak, for you a pain to hold your tongue."

Another Elizabethan chancellor who was sprightly on the bench was Hatton. In a case concerning the limits of certain land, the counsel on one side having remarked with explanatory emphasis, "We lie on this side, my lord;" and the counsel on the other side having interposed with equal vehemence, "We lie on this side, my lord"—the Lord Chancellor leaned backwards and dryly observed, "If you lie on both sides, whom am I to believe?"

The following amiable contest occurred in Westminster Hall between Lord Campbell and an eminent Queen's Counsel. The action was one brought to recover for damages done to a carriage which the Q.C. repeatedly called a *broug-ham*, pronouncing both syllables of the word *brougham*. Whereupon Lord Campbell pompously observed, "*Broom* is the more usual pronunciation; a carriage of the kind you mean is generally and not incorrectly called a *broom*—that pronunciation is open to no grave objection, and it has the great advantage of saving the time consumed by uttering an extra syllable." Half an hour later in the same trial Lord Campbell alluding to a decision given in a similar action, said, "In that the carriage which had sustained injury was an omnibus—" "Pardon me, my lord," interposed the Q.C., "a carriage of the kind to which you draw attention is usually termed a 'bus'; that pronunciation is open to no great objection, and it has the great advantage of saving the time consumed by uttering two extra syllables."

The interruption was followed by a roar of laughter, in which Lord Campbell joined more heartily than anyone else.

Lord Ellenborough has the credit or discredit of having ruined a young man by an outburst of satiric humour. "The *unfortunate* client for whom it is my privilege to appear," said a young barrister, making his first essay in Westminster Hall—"the unfortunate client, my lord, for whom I appear—hem! hem!—I say, my lord, my *unfortunate client*—" Leaning forwards, and speaking in a soft, cooing voice, that was all the more derisive, because it was so gentle, Lord Ellenborough said, "You may go on, sir—so far the court is with you."

This judge was famous for sarcastic speeches to counsel who consumed his time to no purpose. Mr. Preston was a great conveyancer but not a brilliant advocate. On one occasion having inflicted on the court an unspeakably dry oration, towards the close of the day he asked when it would be their lordships' pleasure to hear the remainder of his argument. Lord Ellenborough uttered a sigh of resignation, and answered, "We are bound to hear you, and we will endeavour to give you our undivided attention on Friday next; but as for *pleasure*, that, sir, has been long out of the question."

When in a trial about limestone quarries a barrister called Caldecott had said over and over again with dull verbosity that they "were not rateable, because the limestone could only be reached by boring, which was a matter of science," Ellenborough gravely inquired, "Would you, Mr. Caldecott, have us believe that every kind of *boring* is matter of science?" With finer humour he nipped in the bud one of Randle Jackson's flowery harangues. "My lords," said the orator, with nervous intonation, "in the book of nature it is written—" "Be kind enough, Mr. Jackson," interposed Lord Ellenborough, "to mention the page from which you are about to quote."

After these illustrations of ferocious humour, it is refreshing to read of an act of kindness done by one who could be witty, but who would not sacrifice humanity to wit or ruin a young man's prospects rather than give up a joke. Seeing a young barrister overpowered with nervousness, Mr. Justice Talfourd gave him time to recover himself by saying in the kindest possible manner: "Excuse me for interrupting you, but for a minute I am not at liberty to pay you attention." Whereupon the judge wrote a note to a friend. Before the note was finished the barrister had completely recovered his self-possession.

One of the best "legal" puns was made by Lord Chelmsford when he was Sir Frederick Thesiger. He had objected to a learned serjeant who, in examining witnesses in a case in which he was engaged put leading questions. "I have a right," maintained the serjeant, doggedly, "to deal with my witnesses as I please." "To that I offer no objection," retorted Sir Frederick; "you may *deal* as you like, but you shan't *lead*."

Baron Alderson was an excellent classical scholar, so it made him

shudder when a barrister applied in his court for a "*nolle prosequi*." "Consider, sir," he said, "that this is the last day of term, and don't make things unnecessarily long."

It was this judge who, in reply to the juryman's confession that he was deaf in one ear, observed, "Then leave the box before the trial begins, for it is necessary that jurymen should *hear both sides*."

Lord Ellenborough used to amuse everyone except the witnesses to whom he addressed his sarcastic sayings. To a surgeon who said in the witness-box, "I employ myself as a surgeon," he retorted, "But does anybody else employ you as a surgeon?" The demand to be examined on affirmation being preferred by a Quaker witness, whose dress was so much like the costume of an ordinary *conformist* that the officer of the court had begun to administer the usual oath, his lordship inquired of the "friend," "Do you really mean to impose upon the court by appearing here in the disguise of a reasonable being?"

This about the dress of a witness reminds me of a story I have read somewhere in reference to another judge. A bricklayer came into the witness-box to give evidence in his shirt-sleeves. "Really, witness," said the judge, "you ought to have made yourself more respectable-looking before coming into court. You might at least have put on a coat." "My lord," was the ready answer, "if it comes to that, I am just as properly dressed as yourself. You come into court with gown and wig, which are your working clothes, and I have come in mine."

A witness eighty years old having given his evidence with remarkable clearness, Lord Mansfield examined him as to his habitual mode of living, and found that he had throughout life been an early riser and a singularly temperate man. "Ay," observed the Chief Justice, in a tone of approval, "I have always found that without temperance and early habits, longevity is never attained." The next witness, the *elder* brother of this model of temperance, was then called, and he almost surpassed his brother as an intelligent and clear-headed utterer of evidence. "I suppose," observed Lord Mansfield, "that you also are an early riser?" "No, my lord," answered the veteran stoutly: "I like my bed at all hours, and special-*lie* I like it of a morning." "Ah, but like your brother, you are a very temperate man?" quickly asked the judge, looking out anxiously for the safety of the more important part of his theory. "My lord," responded this ancient Elm, disdaining to plead guilty to a charge of habitual sobriety, "I am a very old man, and my memory is as clear as a bell, but I can't remember the night when I have gone to bed without having been more or less drunk." Lord Mansfield was silent. "Ah, my lord," the leading counsel exclaimed, "this old man's case supports a theory upheld by many persons, that habitual intemperance is favourable to longevity." "No, no," replied the Chief Justice with a smile, "this old man and his brother merely teach us what every carpenter knows—that Elm, whether it be wet or dry, is a very tough wood."

On more than one occasion the infamous Jeffreys, when attempting to brow-beat witnesses, met his match. "You fellow in the leathern doublet," he is said to have exclaimed to a countryman whom he was about to cross-examine, "pray, what are you paid for swearing?" "God bless you, sir, and make you an honest man," answered the farmer, looking the barrister full in the face, and speaking with a voice of hearty good-humour; "if you had no more for lying than I have for swearing, you would wear a leather doublet as well as I."

No barrister was more successful in his treatment of witnesses than Erskine, but he could not convince the fanatic who, objecting to kiss the book in the usual way, stated that he would hold up his hand and swear. Erskine asked him to give his reasons for preferring so eccentric a way to the ordinary mode of giving testimony. "It is written in the book of Revelations," answered the man, "that the angel standing on the sea *held up his hand*." "But that does not apply to your case," urged the advocate; "for in the first place, you are no angel; secondly, you cannot tell how the angel would have sworn if he had stood on dry ground, as you do." This was exactly the reply which the gravest divine would have made to such scruples, but it did not alter the opinion of the witness, and he was permitted to give evidence in his own peculiar way.

Amongst droll anecdotes concerning witnesses may be placed those which exemplify the difficulty which a judge often experiences in understanding the nautical technicalities of sea-faring, and the provincialisms of provincial witnesses. Lord Mansfield was presiding at a trial consequent upon a collision of two ships at sea, when a sailor, whilst giving testimony, said, "At the time I was standing *abast* the binnacle," whereupon his Lordship, with a proper desire to master the facts of the case, observed, "Stay, stay a minute, witness; you say that at the time in question you were *standing abast the binnacle*. Now tell me what is *abast* the binnacle?" This was too much for the gravity of "the salt," who immediately before climbing into the witness-box had taken a copious draught of neat rum. Removing his eyes from the bench, and turning round upon the crowded court with an expression of intense amusement, he exclaimed at the top of his voice, "He's a pretty fellow for a judge! Bless my jolly old eyes! You have got a pretty sort of a landlubber for a judge! He wants me to tell him where *abast the binnacle* is!" Not less amused than the witness, Lord Mansfield rejoined, "Well, my friend, you must fit me for my office by telling me where *abast the binnacle* is. You've already shown me the meaning of *half seas over*!"

The following story exemplifies the difficulty that arises when witnesses use provincial terms with which the judge is not familiar. Giving evidence in Newcastle Courthouse a witness said—"As I was going along the quay, I saw a hubblesheiw coming out of a chare-foot." Not aware that on Tyne-side "hubblesheiw" meant "a course of riotous persons;" that the narrow alleys or lanes of

Newcastle "old town" were called by the inhabitants "chares;" and that the lower end of each alley, where it opened upon quay-side, was termed a "chare-foot;" the judge, seeing only one part of the puzzle, inquired the meaning of the word "hubblesheiw." "A crowd of disorderly persons," answered the witness. "And you mean to say," inquired the judge of assize, with a voice and look of surprise, "that you saw a crowd of people come out of a chare-foot?" "I do, my lord," replied the witness. "Gentlemen," said his lordship turning to the jury, "it must be needless for me to inform you *that this witness is insane!*"

In the same town there was a trial towards the close of the last century, the report of which gives the following succession of questions and answers:—*Barrister*.—"What is your name?" *Witness*.—"Adam, sir—Adam Thompson." *Barrister*.—"Where do you live?" *Witness*.—"In Paradise." *Barrister* (with facetious tone).—"And pray, Mr. Adam, how long have you dwelt in Paradise?" *Witness*.—"Ever since the flood." Paradise is the name of a village in the immediate vicinity of Newcastle, and "the flood" referred to by the witness was the inundation (memorable in local annals) of the Tyne, which, in the year 1771, swept away the old Tyne Bridge.

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## A REVELATION.

"We live in the midst of revelations. . . . There is hardly ever a complete silence in our souls. God is whispering to us well-nigh incessantly . . . only we do not always hear, because of the noise, hurry, and distraction which life causes as it rushes on."—F. W. FABER.

HE took his manuals in his hand,  
He spent long moments on his knees,  
Yet could not find the heavenly doors  
To which he thought them keys.

They told him how he ought to pray,  
Aye, even how to stand and kneel,  
They put strange words upon his lips,  
Suggested things he ought to feel.

They prompted all his acts of praise,  
They fenced about his ways and looks,  
They bade him love on certain lines,  
And think his thoughts from certain books.

The hungry longings of his heart,  
Its vague desires for inward rest,  
Its feeble strivings after God,  
He found not anywhere expressed.

"Oh, Lord," he cried, "I seek in vain,  
I knock and ask, yet find not Thee—  
I am shut in upon myself,  
And with myself is misery!"

With heavy heart he closed his books,  
And heavy-hearted still knelt on,  
'Till suddenly he raised his eyes  
To where the eastern window shone.

Through blazoned panes the sunlight came  
And touched with glory nave and choir,  
And lay upon the chancel steps  
In pools of many-coloured fire.

And lifted high upon the glass,  
The likeness of the Son of God,  
Whose arms uphold the fallen world,  
Smiled down upon him from the rood.

Then all the meaning of that Face—  
More than the artist's skill might dare—  
Seemed suddenly to dawn and glow  
And pierce the clouds of his despair.

The shadow lifted from his heart  
And left it glad, he scarce knew why,  
He almost feared to breathe or move  
Because that God was very nigh.

The hunger of his soul was stayed,  
He was not any more alone;  
But felt the beating heart of love  
As one that understood his own.

Then knew he that our stammering tongues  
That listening Ear can ne'er offend;  
But that He bids us speak with Him  
As "a man speaketh with his friend."

Thus, when all human helpers fail,  
God worketh His more perfect plan—  
Swift through some heavenly window flames  
The glory of the Son of Man.

CHRISTIAN BURKE.





## PAMELA'S NOVEL.

IT was known that Pamela wrote, though what she wrote was a mystery excepting to her family and the intimate family friend, Leonard Venn. It was no secret that she used her pen, and that she used it to good effect; everybody was aware that she sent away packets of MSS. every week by the post, and that in return she received quite big cheques. It was dimly supposed that she wrote for papers, and some of her friends believed, and stated almost positively, that she was on the staff of the *Times* or of the *Saturday Review*, or perhaps of both; only her brothers and sisters and Leonard Venn knew the facts of the case, and they were quite willing to aid her in her wish for privacy.

"Oh, yes, she writes a great deal, she is very clever," they would say when curious people interrogated them. "The *Times* leaders, did you ask? Well, I don't feel at liberty to answer that question. The press is anonymous you know."

The little band who were in the secret often laughed at the speculations of the public.

"Why, I believe they think you write the Archbishop's sermons!" Minnie said one day.

"And what do you think young Tiptop said to me last night at the Lyceum? I've been dying to tell you all day," cried Amy. "He said as seriously as possible, 'Now, Miss Worthington, tell me truly, *didn't* your sister write this play?' It was 'Much Ado about Nothing.'"

They all laughed.

"What terrible idiots most people are!" remarked Pamela.

"Well, for my part, I like to keep up the illusion," said Charlie. "I like it supposed that public opinion is formed in this house. The fellows in my office think you have the ear of both Houses of Parliament, Pamela. Each one, according to his views, is cocksure that you do all the best things in the *Daily News* or the *Morning Post*."

"There's nothing like a little mystery," observed Edwin. "It's part of Pamela's cleverness that she saw that. She's the best man among us, and no mistake."

"Certainly, there's no one to be compared to her," said Leonard, who was the eldest of the little party.

"You all make me blush!" cried Pamela. "After all, it's nothing I do. If I only had time to write something really good! If only I had the opportunity to write a novel that should make all the world hold its breath, then you might talk!" said she.

But Pamela's work was regular, and the opportunity did not come.

The uneventful happy years slipped by, and people went on believing Pamela was some great one, and Pamela herself was happy enough, though she was often restless and chafed at her circumstances. She did not show her discontent to her brothers and sisters, who entertained their friends and went to the theatres, and did many a delightful thing out of Pamela's cheques, but she very often lamented her hard fate to Leonard.

"There are so many thoughts in my mind, and such a fine plot, and characters—Oh, characters that have never been dreamt of before! she exclaimed with enthusiasm. "If I only had time! If I only had a clear two months and could go away into the country by myself! I could do it in two months."

"Well, why don't you take two months' holiday?" Leonard asked.

"Impossible! I should fall out. There are a dozen women anxious to take my place, and quite as capable."

"But if you wrote a novel that electrified the world, you wouldn't want to do this sort of work any longer."

"Not if it caught on. But supposing it didn't catch on, Leonard? good things, the best things, are often not appreciated at first."

"Still I think I should try. Get someone to do your work for you for a couple of months and see what you can do. It isn't as if you worked for your bread and butter."

"Nay, but I work for something we should miss much more. I provide all the elegancies of our lives, all our innocent pleasures and gaieties. Life would be very dull to all the younger ones without me and my cheques. Who would take them to plays and concerts. Who would give Minnie and Amy their extra *chiffons*? Who would help Charlie and Edwin when they are hard up, and boys are always hard up? I couldn't bear to mortify them. And yet," said Pamela, "when I think of my paltry, ignoble business that people call *writing*—ugh! sometimes I can hardly bear it."

"Nothing is paltry and ignoble that is done well and with a good purpose," said Leonard.

"It is like you, Leonard, to say a kind thing. But I sometimes wish I had never begun this kind of work at all. I ought to have sought higher in the first instance; I ought never to have condescended to this sort of thing."

"Perhaps, Pamela, if you had attempted a higher flight you would have met with humiliation and disaster. We can't all fly like the eagle. In the course of my thirty years I have noticed that everyone generally gravitates towards what he can do best."

"Ah, Leonard, you have never believed in me!" cried Pamela with passionate bitterness. "You believe in my capacity to earn money, not in my ability to get fame, to make a name, to create a reputation. You are a man, and I suppose you would hate it if I became celebrated, if people pointed at me in the streets and said, 'There is the greatest authoress since George Eliot?' Why should you be so ungenerous?"

"My dear Pamela, it is I who was imploring you to take a holiday and write your novel, and when you said the holiday was out of the question, I tried to console you. You are unjust, Pamela," said Leonard.

"Oh, I know I oughtn't to be impatient," said Pamela, beginning to cry a little. "But sometimes I feel so small and cooped-up. I wish I had been born without a spark of ambition. What is the good of ambition to a person who only does my work?"

"Believe me, Pamela, without ambition you wouldn't even be doing your work. You would be contented to do nothing like Minnie and Amy. Besides, your work is very good work and nothing to be ashamed of. I wish I thought I had influenced as many of my fellow-creatures for good as you have. Think," said Leonard, smiling, "how many young ladies you have stopped in a mad career of tight-lacing and rouging."

"Yes, that is all very nice," said Pamela, mournfully. "But the long and short of it is that, wrap myself in mystery as I may, I am not a writer at all. I am a mere hack—a mere hack," she repeated.

When Pamela was in this mood it was not very easy to comfort her, but fortunately for poor Leonard, who loved her dearly and was not yet in a position to marry, it did not occur very often. Pamela's ambition frequently slept for months at a time, and then she was gay and contented and the very life of the little house at Chelsea, where she dwelt with her sisters and brothers. During these periods she was quite satisfied that she was able to earn plenty of money, and the mystery in which she was enveloped sufficiently pleased her *amour-propre*.

"It is so comic," she would say. "I like posing as a very great and learned person, when in reality I am only an authority on frocks and cosmetics."

For that was Pamela's secret. She did not write leading articles, nor the reviews of books, nor essays, nor stories; but she wrote all the dress articles for the *Duchess of Fife Weekly*, and monthly fashion letters for the *Rotten Row Review*, and she was the "Rosebud" of *Edith's Magazine*, and the "Fernseed" of *Mrs. Grundy's Gossip*, and the "May-Blossom" of *Tuesday's Toilette*, and wrote columns of "Answers to Correspondents" in these three weekly papers, giving advice as to the re-modelling of old dresses, and what is the best dentifrice, and where to get a *trousseau* for Natal, and why the adult female waist cannot be compressed into sixteen inches, and a host of other matters of equal and similar importance. It was laborious work, because it took up a long time, but it was easy too, because Pamela was accustomed to it, and had been doing it ever since she was nineteen, and probably there was no young woman in London who knew more than she did about dress in all its branches and hair-washes and manicure, and in a wholesome way preserving the complexion and improving the figure. Pamela was strong and healthy, and therefore this continuous work (for she carried it with her even to the seaside) had not told upon her,

and as Leonard had said, she had the pride and pleasure of knowing that she had influenced for good many a girl among her correspondents ; but every now and then, as we have seen, her ambition stirred, the splendid novel that she dreamed of seemed to spring forward, clamouring to be written, and all her work on the fashions and the toilet requisites palled upon her and became flat, stale, and unprofitable.

When Pamela, however, was twenty-seven, a new thing came into her life.

She was sitting alone on one of those fine afternoons in early spring when it seems a joy merely to be alive, and yet when the joy of life is almost a burden and the limbs are languid and the body demands repose. Pamela had just despatched her weekly budget to the *Tuesday Toilette*, and now she was sitting in her pretty drawing-room, nicely dressed, drinking tea. Her brothers and sisters had gone to a *matinée* at the Globe Theatre. The tickets were her present to them, and the fifth ticket, which she had purchased for herself, she had presented the previous evening to one of Charlie's friends, who, she thought, admired Minnie. Everyone had cried out against this, but Pamela had insisted.

"I'm always busy till four o'clock on Saturday, unless I sit up very late on Friday night," she had declared. "Minnie, you know it's the case. Please take it, Mr. Wilson."

So Mr. Wilson took it, and the theatre-party had set forth, leaving Pamela to plod through her correspondence. And on this occasion it was truly plodding, for one of her discontented fits had come on, and her correspondents seemed to be silly little dolts, and the whole affair appeared stupid and tedious.

"A mere drudge—not even a literary hack," she was saying to herself. "Why have I never had a moment to write my novel? O if I only could!"

But how could she take a holiday, when perhaps Minnie would be married in the summer, and she would want all the money she could get in order that her younger sister might have a beautiful *trousseau*.

"Otherwise I really would get Mrs. Abdy to do my work for a few weeks and I'd go away into the country," she thought. "Mrs. Abdy has done such work, but she's given it up since she married, and she wouldn't want to get it from me."

Then Leonard Venn came in, and it was he who brought the new thing into her life. He looked very eager, as he took her hand, and she remarked upon his unwonted demeanour, for he was generally quiet and grave.

"What has happened? You look quite excited," she cried.

"I am rather excited," he replied. "They are going to take me into partnership. My prospects are suddenly bettered a thousandfold. I can do at once things I had expected to wait and wait for. I can take a house. I can marry."

"Yes!" said Pamela. She did not blush or cast down her eyes. For years she had been so absorbed in her work and her ambitions that she had never guessed, what was patent to everyone else, that Leonard was in love with her. But in a moment, while she looked up innocently into his glowing face, the new thing was thrown at her feet in the shape of an honest, manly declaration of love, and an offer of marriage.

Pamela put up her hands as if to shield herself from some danger. "Oh no, no!" she cried. "How could you think of such a thing? Why did you say this? Why did you disturb our nice, happy friendship? Oh no, no!" she repeated.

Leonard was terribly disappointed. But he kept his temper and his head. "Why should I not have thought of such a thing?" he asked. "I have loved you for many years, Pamela. Why should I not seek you for my wife? Am I too presumptuous?"

"No, no, Leonard! Forgive me if I seemed uncourteous. Presumptuous! How could *you* presume? But I am so surprised. I never thought of such a thing."

"Couldn't you try and get used to the thought of it?"

She shook her head.

"No, Leonard, no! I haven't thought much about marrying, but when I have thought of it, I have always pictured to myself being wooed by some king-like stranger, someone who fell in love with me at first sight and believed in my powers—not an old friend whom I knew when he was a schoolboy, and who knows all the ins and outs of my tempers and my waywardnesses and all about my stupid writings and my dreary work——"

"And all your generosity and unselfishness and loving ways, and all your pluck and perseverance, and unwearying zeal," interrupted the lover.

"Leonard, you make me ashamed of myself. You love me, but I want to be admired and believed in. You don't believe in my talents a little bit," said Pamela, with emphasis. "You don't think I could write a fine novel. You think I am only good to describe the fashions."

"If you will be my wife, dear, you shall have all the leisure you desire. There will be no need for you to describe the fashions then. You shall sit at peace and write your novel."

"Ah, you say that to tempt me. You want to cajole me, but in your heart you don't believe my novel would be worth reading. You know you don't."

"You have no right to say that, dear Pamela. At present, all you say you want is the opportunity, and I promise that you shall have the opportunity."

"But you don't believe I can write a good novel?"

He remained silent.

"Speak, Leonard! Do you believe that I could write a really fine novel?"

"Pamela, you push me very hard, but if I deceive you now, you will never believe me in anything. Dearest, I believe you are the best and sweetest woman in the world, and to me you are the loveliest and the most lovable, but I do not imagine that you have the gifts to produce a great novel."

"I knew it," said Pamela. "I am not angry with you, Leonard. You can't help your opinions; besides, I have always known them. But don't you see that it would be impossible for me to marry you? I should be miserable if my husband only respected my virtues and thought little of my mind."

So the colloquy ended. But when Leonard had gone, Pamela cried violently, and when the theatre-party returned, she had gone to bed with a headache.

\* \* \* \* \*

Leonard Venn did not come very often to the little house at Chelsea during the ensuing months; but in the excitement of Minnie's engagement to Mr. Wilson and the preparations for her marriage, the infrequency of his visits was not much remarked upon. A wedding was a new thing in the Worthington family, and even Charlie and Edwin, though they pretended to make a mock of it, thought and talked of little else. The bride-elect was radiant, and Amy was full of smiles and happiness. That Pamela was a little grave was easily explained. She was the eldest, she reminded the others, and her sisters and brothers had been confided to her charge by their dear mother, and she naturally felt a certain responsibility in sending one of them out into the world. They believed her; but this statement was not altogether true, as Pamela knew very well in her heart.

She scarcely knew if she regretted having refused Leonard, but she did know that she missed his society extremely, and that, in all the little questions which arose respecting the marriage, she would have given much to be able to consult him. To have lost his friendship was like losing a high wall that kept off the north wind. Till it was a thing of the past, she had not guessed how precious it was to her, nor how necessary. She told herself constantly that she did not love him, and that she could never, never be happy with a man who did not perceive and acknowledge her mental gifts. Nevertheless, she felt very lonely without him, and she began to wonder how she could support her routine-work in the years to come, if she could no longer, as of old, pour out her jeremiads into his kind ear.

She chafed under the idea that he held her capacity cheap, and her vague ambition gathered strength as she pondered what he had said: "But he shall not despise me," she said to herself, employing a term that he had never used. "I *will* write my novel, and he shall see what I can do."

The notion gained ground, and by the time July came it was known that, as soon as Minnie was married, Pamela meant to carry out her long-talked-of project and retire alone into the country to



write a novel undisturbed. Leonard, however, only heard of it on the wedding-day. Edwin was his informant, and it was not till late in the afternoon, when the bride and bridegroom had departed and the guests were taking their leave, that he managed to approach the mistress of the house. He thought she looked very pretty in her mauve dress and bonnet (she had chosen mauve, as an elder-sisterly colour, she had told her friends), but he thought also that she looked tired and perhaps rather sad.

"Good-bye, Pamela," he said. "I congratulate you. It has been a very pretty wedding."

"Minnie looked very sweet, didn't she?" said the sister, with some pride.

"Very. I hear you are going out of town immediately?"

"Yes. On Saturday. All by myself into a completely country place, nine miles from a station." She spoke with elation, and her eyes were very bright.

"You won't be dull?" he said.

"Oh no! I shall be far too busy."

"Are you going to write the novel?"

"Yes, Leonard. At last!"

He stood looking down at her eager face, with trouble in his eyes.

"I shall give myself up to it," she went on, speaking rapidly and with excitement. "It is all in my mind, and I feel that it will flow from my pen. I shall do nothing else. Mrs. Abdy is taking all my work for eight weeks, but in eight weeks it will be done. Then, Leonard, you will see?"

"I hope I shall *read*," said he. "Well, I wish you all success. I hope you will be very happy and attain your heart's desire."

"Thank you. I am sure I shall be very happy. I feel that I shall revel in congenial work. And you, Leonard," she added, "are you doing well?"

"I am doing as well as a man can do who has been foiled in the longing of his life," he returned quietly.

Then he held her hand for an instant and was gone, and Pamela's eyes filled with tears.

"But soon I shall have accomplished my great work, and he will see, he will know," she thought to herself. "Then, when he acknowledges my powers—then if he asks me again—why, then——"

She did not finish her joyful thought in words; but it is certain that when she journeyed to her country solitude on the following Saturday she was thinking more of the delight of convincing Leonard Venn that she was a great novelist, than of electrifying the entire world.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pamela had taken lodgings in a gamekeeper's cottage on the estate of a great nobleman, who had so many fine places that he could only visit each of them once in about six years. This year Fulcroft Manor

was empty, but this pleased Pamela, who wanted to be quite alone, and she set to work immediately and began to write 'The Story of Clanrickarde.' The story, as she had surmised, flowed from her pen. She wrote easily, fluently, not pausing for a word or an idea. Plot, character, dialogue, all arranged themselves in her mind as she went along; the book wrote itself, as she had heard that the books of great authors always did. Pamela sat writing in her sunny little parlour, with the door open to the sounds and scents of the rustic homestead and the old-fashioned garden, from early morn till an hour or so past noon. Then her simple dinner was served, after which she would wander forth among the woods and lanes and fields, thinking always of 'Clanrickarde,' her mind absorbed with him and the fame he was to bring her. The only other thought that possessed her was that of Leonard, and this was a thought of triumph, for she already, in anticipation, saw herself the first novelist of the day, and her old friend and lover yielding homage to her genius. It was a delightful time, the most delightful that Pamela had ever known.

One day, however, Pamela's solitude was interrupted by an adventure. Her landlady had told her that Mr. Cunningham Burgess, his lordship's cousin, had come down to the Manor.

"He's a hart-cricket, ma'am," the good woman explained, "an' he says he likes to come down for a bit o' rest after the London season."

Pamela did not come across him for several days, but at last one evening, when in climbing over a fence, she slipped and rolled to the bottom of a deep ditch. He started up as if he had been lying in wait for the accident, and rendered her his assistance. It was a common little adventure, such as must happen many times every year; but the lady who falls is not always daintily-attired and very pretty, and the gentleman who lends his aid is not invariably young and handsome and dressed in brown velveteen, and a red tie and soft felt hat. Pamela took in all these details at a glance, but at the moment she merely expressed her thanks warmly and went on her way. But the "hart-cricket," who was already tired of his rest at Fulcroft Manor, determined that the incident should not end there, and he made it his business to meet Pamela the next day.

"I hope you don't feel any ill-effects from your fall yesterday," he said, stopping in the middle of the woodland walk where he met her, and taking off his hat.

"Oh, no, thank you," Pamela returned, graciously. "The nettles stung me rather, but that was all the harm I received."

"Ah, but nettle-stings are very painful," said he.

"But they soon pass," said she, laughing.

"How did you treat them?" he asked, solicitously. "May I turn and walk beside you for a few minutes?"

Thus originated the acquaintance that quickly ripened into an intimacy. Pamela was conscious that she was committing an

unconventionality; but one does many things on a holiday that could not be done at home, and now that 'The Story of Clanrickarde' was nearly finished she began to feel a certain hunger for society. Besides, the companionship of Mr. Cunningham Burgess was stimulating, and she was pleased to know personally a man whose writing she had known for some years. So she permitted him to join her in her walks every afternoon, and the art-critic quickly initiated an intellectual flirtation which diverted him and somewhat intoxicated Pamela. Not that she was in love with her new friend; but his whole conversation tended to feed her ambition and filled her with desires, and aspirations, and hopes that had hitherto remained latent in her soul. She never told him, however, that she was at the foot of the journalistic ladder, to the top of which he had climbed, and he never guessed that the mysterious business which she told him had brought her to Fulcroft was the writing of a novel.

Truth to tell, Mr. Cunningham Burgess talked better than he listened, and he had so much to say about his own opinions that he scarcely noticed how little he gleaned of Pamela's ideas.

"Art," he would say, lying handsome and sunburnt in the yellowing bracken beside the fallen tree-trunk on which Pamela was seated, "art is the *summum bonum* of the life of the best men and women. Not realism, which is mere imitation, puerile and tedious, like the urchins crying, 'Cuckoo! Cuckoo!' in the spring, nor yet idealism, which is mere ignorant imagining, like the superstitious man's belief in ghosts, but *Poetism*, the blending of the actual with the possible, the union of that which is with that which could be, the combination of sight with insight."

Such talk greatly excited Pamela, and her heart beat high with hope and longing. If only, she thought, she could show her MS. to Mr. Cunningham Burgess! If she could but get his opinion! If she could draw from him the verdict that 'The Story of Clanrickarde' was, as she believed it to be, the essence of *Poetism*, blending the actual with the possible, uniting that which is with that which could be, combining sight with insight! Yet she shrank from requesting him to read her novel, and she knew not why. Perhaps because Leonard Venn's *dictum* on her capabilities still rung in her ears.

But September was hastening to its close, and in a few days Pamela's holiday would be over. One noon she wrote the last word of 'The Story of Clanrickarde,' and for hours afterwards she sat reading it, fascinated by her own work. She rose up at last, tired but triumphant. For it was very good—it would make her reputation—it would place her on the pinnacle of fame—it would rank her with the best. Feverishly, she drank the tea that had been brought to her and forgotten, then put on her hat and went out. She went straight to the fallen tree among the ferns, where she and the art critic most frequently ended their rambles. A little still pool lay there, and to-day it looked dark and deep, for it was past six and the sun had

set. Mr. Cunningham Burgess was there. He flung away his cigar and came to meet her.

"Why have you tarried so long?" he said reproachfully. "I have been expecting you for hours."

"I have been very much occupied," she faltered. Even now, she dared not say, "I have finished my book—I have done my great work."

"You look dreadfully tired and overdone," he said, making her sit down. "What was your occupation? That is, may I ask? May I know?"

Then an artifice suddenly darted into her mind.

"You may know, and you may help me, if you will," she said, timidly.

"If I will? What is there I would not do for you?" he returned.

"But this is asking a good deal. It is taking up your time. It is to read the MS. of a novel."

"Oh!" said he, making a comical face. "But of course I will do it. Tell me about it. Who has written it?"

"Someone," said Pamela, tremulously, "whom I know very well, has written a novel. I have been reading it all the afternoon. If you are so very kind, I should like your opinion of it."

"Certainly you shall have it. But is the thing good. Is it worth anything?"

"It impressed me very much. Of course I am not a critic, but——"

"But you think favourably of it?"

She nodded.

"Then I daresay I shall do the same. If I may, I will walk back with you now and fetch it. It is getting too late and dark for you to be out. When will you meet me to-morrow? Then I can give my verdict."

"I will meet you here at three o'clock," said Pamela.

She was tingling with anxiety, she was on thorns with expectation. When she saw Mr. Cunningham Burgess go away with 'The Story of Clanrickarde' under his arm, she felt faint with agonising apprehension. What if he thought ill of it? But he could not—he could not! She went out into the garden where the asters and geraniums looked white in the starlight, and sat down on a bench among the hollyhocks and looked up into the arch of heaven, and recalled to mind passionately how good—how very good—her novel was. It would win the world. The great critic would bow down before it.

"I have done a great thing," she said to herself, going up the narrow stairs to her bedroom.

All night she lay awake, mentally following Mr. Cunningham Burgess's reading of the wonderful book. Every chapter lay before her. Almost every page stood before her mental vision. As she reached the best bits, the special points, her breast panted and her colour rose, as she pictured to herself the rapture of her new friend,

his astonishment, his eagerness to know who was the author, his intense congratulations when at last the secret was revealed to him. With his words of praise ringing in her ears, Pamela fell asleep in the early morning, and when she awoke the day had long begun.

It was a chill autumn day, misty, and sunless, and Pamela's heart answered to the weather's mood. Her nocturnal elation had gone. Suppose, she thought, that after all Mr. Cunningham Burgess had not appreciated this work of hers? She dawdled about, feeling disconsolate. Her occupation was gone, and for the first time since her arrival at Fulcroft she felt lonely. She began to wish that Leonard were with her. She could have told him of her hopes and fears, and he would have listened patiently all day while she discussed the possibilities of Mr. Cunningham Burgess's announcement.

The day, too, did not brighten. The sun remained veiled and the air continued sharp. The low sky looked very threatening, and when Pamela sallied forth to her rendezvous, she wrapped herself in a cloak and took an umbrella. It was not a romantic equipment, and Pamela felt depressed.

Mr. Cunningham Burgess was awaiting her at the usual spot, and he greeted her at once with his accustomed airy hilarity.

"How the weather has changed!" he cried. "I've had a fire. Is it too cold for you to sit down? I've brought a rug on purpose. Let us have a good talk. About this MS. now. Who wrote it?"

"I don't think I can tell you," replied Pamela. She began to be very fearful, and her teeth almost chattered. "What do you think of it?" she asked.

"What do I think of it?" said the critic. "I could tell you in one word. But I don't want to hurt your feelings. Is it a *very* dear friend of yours who has written it?"

So 'The Story of Clanrickarde' was damned! For an instant Pamela's consciousness went from her and she neither saw nor heard, nor felt anything. But it was only for an instant, and Mr. Cunningham Burgess noticed nothing.

"I would rather know," she said. "What is that one word?"

"'Rubbish,'" said he.

"Oh!" cried Pamela. It was the one sign of pain she gave. Then she rested her elbow on her knee and shaded her face with her hand. "Tell me why," she said, in a steady voice.

"Oh, there are fifty reasons, but the one that suffices is that the whole thing is radically inferior," said the critic lightly. "The plot is too sensational, the dialogue is too stilted, the characters are either too heroic or too villainous, the fun is childish, the tragedy is burlesque, the *dénouement* is silly. The whole thing is utterly commonplace. I expect that it was written by one of those smart young ladies who do the dress correspondence columns in the fashion papers. My sister takes in *Edith's Magazine*, and there's a certain "Rosebud" who writes in it, whom she thinks a great deal of. I've read

her things sometimes, and she has a dashing way of expressing herself, but of course it isn't literature. Am I right? Was the MS. written by one of these soap-and-perfumery-and-newest-thing-in-skirts-ladies?" said he, laughing.

"And if so?" said poor Pamela.

"If so, tell her to stick to what she can do and not try to soar higher than her little tinsel wings will take her. It's the kindest message I can send her. Don't let her imagine she has the gifts to produce a readable novel," said Mr. Cunningham Burgess, unconsciously almost repeating Leonard Venn's words.

What Pamela might have said in her vexation, and whether she could have much longer concealed her chagrin, I cannot say; but nature was good to her, and at that moment the rain came pattering down in large drops upon the fallen leaves, and Mr. Cunningham Burgess sprang up and said he would open Miss Worthington's umbrella and see her home. And this he insisted on doing, though Pamela, who had desperate visions of drowning 'The Story of Clanrickarde' in some stagnant pond, begged him to leave her.

"Good-bye," he said at the door of the cottage, carefully handing the MS. to her. "You go back to town to-morrow? We shall be safe to meet in the winter. Be sure you give your friend the authoress a little judicious snubbing."

Then he trudged away through the rain, quite unconscious of the havoc he had wrought in Pamela's soul; and Pamela, flinging her hat and cloak upon the floor, wildly set light to the fire, and with feverish haste began to tear up her MS. and thrust the leaves between the bars of the grate. It was a holocaust of her ambition, of her heart's desire, of her highest hopes, and the tears almost blinded her as she pursued her task. But she never wavered. Mr. Cunningham Burgess had unwittingly hit her very hard; but his plain speaking had opened the eyes of her mind, and she saw herself now as Leonard Venn had always seen her. She went on piling the leaves upon the flames, crying all the time, abusing herself for her conceit and stupidity, and wondering how she could ever face even the few persons who knew that she had retired into the country to write a novel that should set the world ringing with her name. But anyone who has ever seen the MS. of a three-volume novel will know that it cannot be consumed quickly, and by the time the conflagration was over, Pamela had cried till she could cry no longer, and her fever and excitement had given place to a dulness and heaviness, and a feeling that it did not matter whether she lived or died, or if the whole world knew that she had tried to write a novel, and Mr. Cunningham Burgess were told that she was "Rosebud."

And while she sat there, gazing drearily at the smouldering mass of paper, while the rain dripped upon the window-panes, someone tapped at the door; and when, in a dismal voice, she said, "Come in," Leonard entered.



"How do you do, Pamela?" he said, in his usual quiet way. "I was in the neighbourhood and thought I would drive over. What a smell of burnt paper!" he went on, approaching her. "What is it? All the daily papers all the time you've been here?"

Pamela gave him her hand.

"It is my novel," she said, huskily.

"You are unhappy," said Leonard, keeping her cold hand in his. "Tell me all about it."

Then she burst into tears again and told him everything, and she felt comforted, merely because he was with her.

"You were right," she concluded, wiping her eyes and trying to smile. "Oh, Leonard, how you must despise me!"

"Nay," said he. "Despise the woman I want for my wife? That is impossible. Pamela, dearest, have I won you?"

\* \* \* \* \*

When Mr. Cunningham Burgess met Pamela again she had been transformed into Mrs. Leonard Venn, and he thought she was a charming married woman.

"And what about that novel?" he asked her one day. "Did you make the authoress see she was impossible?"

"I did," said Pamela, looking thoughtfully into the fire. "She was the 'Rosebud' of *Edith's Magazine*, and it was very clever of you to guess it. In fact, your perspicacity in that direction made her believe you. She burnt 'The Story of Clanrickarde,' and she is married since and laughs at herself for ever having posed as a novelist. But do you know," said Pamela, laughing, "if you care for the honour, you share one secret with her which her husband can never know? You read the ill-fated MS."

"He need not be jealous," said the critic.

"If he is like me he is not jealous," said Leonard.

"He need not be," remarked Pamela. "Though I own it pleased me at first, because I cared for the author, I see now that it was very stupid."

FAYR MADOC.



## LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

BY CHARLES W. Wood, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THE BRETONS AT HOME," "IN THE LOTUS LAND," ETC., ETC.

EAST LONDON. *May*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—My last letter concluded with a short description of the miseries of East London.

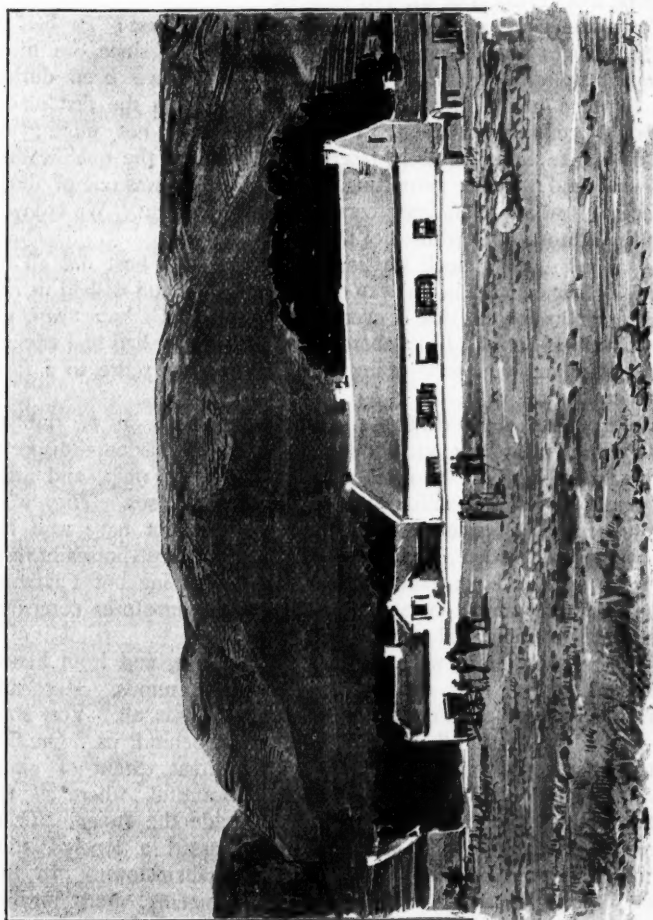
Before continuing that theme, let me say a few words about our experience from Grahamstown and the long drive we took in that most uncomfortable conveyance, a South-African post-cart. Yet so fine was the weather, so exhilarating the air, that, glad as we were at the end of some fourteen hours to see the lights of King Williamstown, I think we could almost have done it all over again, after an hour's rest and a supply of "cakes and ale."

We started from Grahamstown, you will remember, about seven in the morning. The previous Sunday was closely observed as a day of rest. To anyone with nerves a little overwrought by much travelling, the stillness was very soothing, and one could imagine the remainder of the week more blessed for this due observance of the Law. The great question with regard to Monday was whether to travel to King Williamstown by public post-cart or private conveyance; and we found that however unwilling they were to bring out their carts on Sunday, they were quite ready to take a great deal of trouble on that day for a possible customer on the Monday—something after the manner of the Quaker selling his cow. But there was nothing very inconsistent in this: nor anything very heinous.

We hesitated a good deal. On the one hand we should be more comfortable in our own cart; might command it; stop and journey as we pleased; have everything at our disposal, including a good and obliging driver. But this driver only used a pair of horses, and, unlike the official post-cart, was not bound to a certain time. If the horses grew tired, or a wheel gave way, or the harness broke down, we might be late for our Tuesday morning train, and miss the vessel at East London. If one could only see into the future!

On the other hand, the post-cart was bound to be in the same night, and to do that he drove four horses, if not occasionally six. It seemed impossible for a pair of horses to do the work of four or six in the same time. Even thus he was not supposed to reach King Williamstown before seven at night—and, as it turned out, he did not reach it before nine. Yet with my present experience if I had to do the journey over again I think I should risk the private conveyance.

We started with five persons besides the driver. The cart was one of those awkward arrangements where the passengers in the back seat have to take their place before those in the front seat can get in. This front seat, holding two and the driver, our landlord had secured



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through a telegram sent from Capetown ; with liberty to give it up if we changed our minds. Our fellow-passengers were quiet, inoffensive men, who, knowing the road well, rather preferred the back seat to the front : an amicable division of interests that does not always

happen. One was a minister evidently belonging to the Dutch Church, for he spoke very little English. He had been visiting Grahamstown and was returning to his own charge. The other two were commercial travellers, quiet and intelligent: a calling that in South Africa is no doubt very different from that of England, exacting less keenness of wit and wisdom.

Fortunately the day was lovely from first to last: for had it rained deluges and blown a hurricane as it has since, we must have put up with it. What the misery would have been during that fourteen hours' drive, I dare not imagine. In the first place, it would certainly run on to twenty hours, if not more; for post-carts, like sailing vessels, reserve to themselves the qualification of "wind and weather permitting." But the day was one of those perfect days which sometimes herald a mighty change. We enjoyed it to the utmost, nor dreamed of the future.

So about seven o'clock we finally started. Our host did all he could for our comfort in the way of cushions, etc., and wished us *bon voyage*; informing us that if ever we returned to Grahamstown, we should probably not find him there. He and his wife had had enough of hotel-keeping, and were going to sell the inn and retire to a farm in the country.

The surly and silent driver—whom as time went on we dubbed Surly Solon, charitably attributing his silence to wisdom—disposed of his letter-bags, got into his place, cracked his whip, and away we went with all the willingness of four fresh horses. They were not admirable specimens, and certainly would not have won the Derby; but one soon finds that in South Africa post-horses have to work too hard and constantly to take after anything but Pharaoh's lean kine. Yet these we started with were fine creatures compared with some we exchanged on the road.

Crossing the railway, we passed out of the town, and from henceforth had nothing but country to occupy our minds. Here and there was a small solitary settlement, and that was all. Very soon we seemed to leave all life and civilisation behind us. On first quitting Grahamstown we entered upon a great extent of grass-land: long undulating slopes, green and beautiful, where all the cattle in the world might find pasture, so wide the sweep. Then, where it grew more wild and rocky, we passed a lonely-looking sanatorium, 500 feet above the level of Grahamstown. In this lonely spot the air is more pure and bracing, and invalids congregate. And not only invalids; for sportsmen find occupation amongst the hills and a certain reward for a solitary day's tramp; and so the house, lonely without, is often anything but lonely within. To us there is inexpressible charm in these wild solitudes; but it is one thing to visit them, and another to live amongst them for ever.

A singular small colony; a little company out of the world, dependent upon each other for society; an oasis in the desert. Though

not so far from Grahamstown they might for all seeming be in the wildest parts of Zululand.

We did not stay here, even to exchange greetings, but went on and changed horses about a mile further on the road, where we also took in another mail bag: wondering where they would finally be stowed away if taken in very often. Before the end of the journey the passengers had to put up with a good deal of inconvenience.

It would be difficult to describe the beauty and charm of the drive, especially its first part. Much of the scenery was magnificent, and that I am told is the exception in South Africa. Here and there you come upon spots of rare grandeur, which remind you of the finest parts of Europe, but they are few and far between. Such are: the Hex River Valley within a day's journey of Cape Town, and which we hope to see by-and-by; the Gates of St. John's River, or the Umzimvubu, which is reached by a journey through Pondoland; a small section lying between Port Elizabeth and Natal.

The river flows to the sea through a cleft in a lofty mountain. The steeps on either side are forest-clad, the precipitous cliffs are 1200 feet high, and the view is considered almost the finest in the country. Within the gates it is equally beautiful, but less wild: low hills surround the water, which resembles a huge lake, in whose calm depths the verdant banks find their placid reflection. Most beautiful are the Tsitsa Waterfalls, in Kaffraria,—which is only another name for Kaffirland—the largest in the Colony, 150 yards across, and nearly 400 feet deep. The rushing, roaring sound may be heard for miles across the wide plains, in this rarefied air: and in this dense silence and solitude, this immense stretch of the heavens above, the falls are almost more impressive than those of Niagara. This thousands of tons of water for ever falling is such a mighty voice in the wilderness.

Beautiful also is Queen's Town with its neighbouring snow hills: long-drawn-out undulations contrasting with the pale blue of the sky, all dazzling in the matchless atmosphere; the little town, with its white roofs and sheds and tiny towers sleeping in the hollow, like the sole guardian of a world that has returned to the ice age.

Beautiful are the wide plains of the Karroo, bringing back life and health to many a hopeless invalid; a few farms dotted about in vast and solitary plains with thousands of acres attached to each lonely settlement.

Beautiful, we have seen, was the Victoria Drive round Table Mountain, with its luxuriant vegetation, its hills and passes, its silver trees and rich vineyards. But here one never loses the feeling of being in touch with life and civilisation. Round the corner of that gigantic hill, though we cannot at the moment see it, lies a great colony of houses, a crowd of human beings; and the desert-like feeling of solitude, of being "the last man on earth," is never there.

But a good deal of this is felt on the drive from Grahamstown to King Williamstown.

Here and there we stopped at small road-side shanties, dignified with a long name and a post-office; exchanged letters or took in a fresh mail bag, wondering where they all came from. Often in the wide plains not another house or settlement was visible.

The scenery in this early part was very fine: especially so at Pluto's Vale, where the hills seemed to have been playing at nine-pins, and to have settled down anyhow; splitting up into chasms and precipices, here rocky and barren, there soft and beautiful and rich with purple heather, with numerous wild flowers, with lovely specimens of the soft and silky cotton plant: a flower which always brings to memory the far-off but no less wild and desolate island off Stromness where Norna of the Fitful Head was wont to resort, and where her deformed, uncanny dwarf Pacolet found his abode. There the stones still lie, just as that wonderful Wizard of the North with his magic described them. For here we first saw the wild plant growing in such abundance that in a very short time we might easily have gathered enough to spin a winding-sheet for Norna and all her tribe.

In our South African drive was room for a myriad Nornas and Pacolets. Surrounding these wooded undulations and deeper valleys were apparently endless sweeps of country, soothing and beautiful to the vision: outlines soft and billowy, as if here too the mighty ocean had once had it all its own way, and, retiring, had photographed its presence for ever. Above was the clear blue sky; a bright and sparkling air that at all times ought to dispel life's gloomiest visions; air and tones only to be found in these latitudes. Our lean kine went with a will, galloping up-hill, sweeping round curves, apparently enjoying it all as much as those to whose pleasure they certainly contributed; knowing well that at a given point work for the present would be over, and the greater toil the sooner rest. It is useless to say animals have instinct but no reason; they must have reason; it is not this which separates man from the animal world, but something higher still.

Sometimes on our way we came to a steep ascent or descent, when it was necessary and infinitely pleasant to get down and walk. For a spell we left the high road, and wandered into the soft, springy turf, rejoicing in all the fresh scents of nature, all the wild flowers that gave them. With many we were unacquainted; had never seen them in England; but that only made them more interesting. What we felt most of all, I think, was the solitude; the unbroken almost eternal silence of these vast spaces; the absence of life; scarcely a bird, and never a living animal of any sort. They exist no doubt, but evidently do not abound, and they know how to hide themselves.

This added immensely to the impression of the drive. And at



long intervals we came to the usual shanty; the settlement with its quaint name and invariable post-office. But our arrival caused little excitement, and often the owner, who probably wrote himself Post-master, and was a sort of mayor and corporation, Justice of the Peace, and landed proprietor all rolled into one, did not even condescend to come out to admire our fine cattle and speed us on our way. The work of exchanging letters and letter-bags was transacted within, and we were not admitted to mysteries as sealed as the secrets of Freemasonry, with its unknown signs and inquisitorial renown.

As time and the drive went on, we came to Committee's Drift, and the Fish River Hotel. Where the Committee assembles, who it can be composed of, what the weighty affairs it discusses, these questions for us will remain amongst the unsolved mysteries of creation.

So with the Fish River Hotel. Its guests one would think must be few and far between; perhaps a handful of disciples of Walton who come here occasionally to see what sport the water will give them. They will find repose and quiet, if nothing else. Yes, something more; the situation is beautiful; and we felt we could here spend a week very happily.

It was small, and as far removed from fashion as the poles—imagine "fashion" in a South African desert; but given the place to ourselves and what glorious revellings might we not have. What risings and settings of the sun; what wanderings over desolate heaths; what sparkling air; what fish for breakfast or dinner, of our own taking from the stream hard by; what moonlight nights, the whole vast country bathed in silver beams; what phantom-haunted plains when midnight chimed upon the far-off clocks of Grahams-town; chimes inaudible to our ears but not to the ghosts of the past, who know nothing of time and space. And what twilight meditations, not with Harvey amongst the Tombs, but even greater solitudes; this endless tract of beautiful country; these breezy downs; rejoicing in what Adam Lindsay Gordon has called God's glorious oxygen; full and free here as anywhere on earth.

This, however, for us was a dream and a vision, as we wandered through the little rooms of the hotel; tiny rooms a few feet square and a few feet high, where antiquated photographs were disposed in books about the table; faded and of a day long gone by; making us feel quite antediluvian, as we remembered with a shudder that such crinolined curiosities had been seen in our infancy. Photographs of people who have long joined the congregation of the midnight ghosts, and which make one so hopelessly depressed and melancholy, as page after page is turned over in search of something of our present day and generation.

On the walls were prints of the Royal Family, of many dates and ages. These we find everywhere, and it seems to me that the South

Africans are nothing if not loyal—all honour to them. Yet how much more might belong to the Queen's dominions if it had not been thrust back upon them whether they would or no; mighty districts, large countries of incalculable wealth and influence. Think of the rejected Transvaal, with all its unknown possibilities.

So we gazed with pleasure on these royal libels upon the walls; the libels did not matter; feeling and sentiment were everything. The little rooms were clean and neat; there was not a thing out of place; it might be that they had never been occupied, and to-day certainly the inn was empty even of the very ghosts of visitors.

We soon pushed onward, crossed the bridge over the river, and looked into depths where no water was. The river had almost dried up; its bed lay exposed to the sunshine, red, rugged and rocky. Where were the fish and what doing? Congregated perhaps in pools and eddies, further up-stream or further down-stream, waiting for Heaven's floodgates to unloose and set them free. They have not waited long; the rain we have had since ought to set all torrents roaring with tenfold noise, and fill all rivers to overflowing. The Scotch have a homely proverb: "The mickle makes the muckle." There are many renderings, but all have the same bearing, and this is short and direct as any: by the same token it is wonderful how quickly the thousand tributary streams that flow into a mighty river will cause the lowest and driest to rise and overflow its banks.

So we went on, out of the lovely valley, up hill, through wonderful stretches of country, over boundless undulations, until at last we reached Breakfast Vlei.

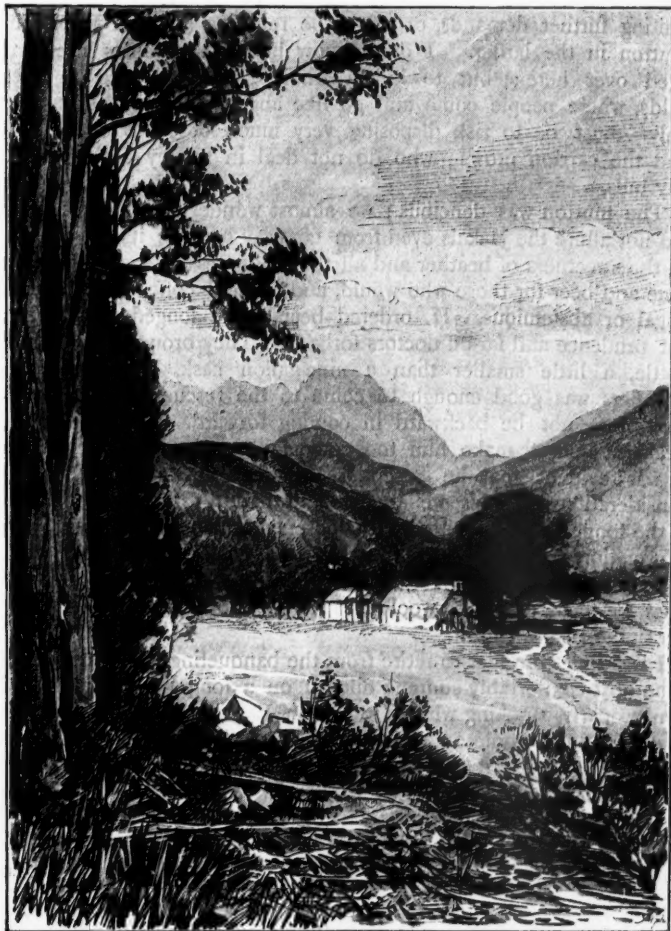
This is a sort of half-way house, though we were a little more than half way on our journey.

And here we were supposed to get down and refresh ourselves with baked meats. The landlord was the very sort of man one might expect to see in these desert wilds; civil and good-natured, taking life easily, therefore substantial and comfortable in appearance; a physical condition no doubt encouraged by the wonderful air. For the house, or inn, stands upon high ground; on the highest of breezy undulations, overlooking the country; the heavens above forming a magnificent dome; blue sky and green earth blending in that eternal harmony that has existed since the creation. If we had imagined we could spend a week at Fish River, still more we thought so here. But for that inexorable *Dunottar*, we should certainly have remained; no other earthly power could have drawn us away.

Here too it was a small house, very much like an enlarged shanty or bungalow; with small low rooms where one would want the windows for ever open to the glorious oxygen. But here, as elsewhere in South Africa, it grows cold at night, whatever the warmth of the autumn or winter day. This is one of the charms and merits of the country. Even in hot summer weather, at sundown a breeze springs

up, the nights are cool, and you wake up the next morning restored and refreshed, ready for the "burden and heat of the day," no matter what that may be.

To-day it was autumn, and bright and beautiful as sky and



SOUTH AFRICAN FARM.

sunshine were, it was by no means too warm, but just what we would have had it.

Within we found a sumptuous repast it was well to do justice to—those who were by any means able; there would be no further chance of a substantial meal until King Williamstown—and the

hour of that consummation was far more uncertain than the appearance of the frolicsome ghosts on the midnight plains. There was more than one course, let me tell you, of which the *pièce de résistance* was the substantial leg of a South African-down sheep; which might now be wandering about its prairies on three legs, waiting further demands, or might be reposing as good wholesome mutton in the larder. I don't know how these things are managed over here; but to kill a whole sheep at once in these wilds, where people come and go like angels—in point of numbers only—must be to risk disposing very much of it to the jackals and the carrion crows—who do not deal in money or pretend to pay bills.

The mutton was delicious; we almost wonder the fragrant fumes did not allure the jackals even from far-away haunts; its flavour had all the sweetness of heather and all the tenderness of age. There was wine and beer for those who would, and tea and coffee for the more frugal or abstemious. H. ordered beer and I longed to join him, but prudence and far-off doctors forbade. They brought him a huge bottle, a little smaller than a nine-gallon cask, but one of the travellers was good enough to come to the rescue. In this world one must not be backward in coming forward. We were rather afraid it might make him too convivial and "approaching;" for it was evident that he accepted the beer not altogether out of consideration for H.'s welfare; but it had no evil consequences. If the tongue was presently a little loosened, it was employed in giving information about things on the road and places and people, which proved interesting and instructive. Thus, if you feed a sheep with grass, he repays you with wool; and if you—but I need not continue; the simile suggests itself.

I was quite the first to retire from the banqueting-room, and found mine host comfortably sunning himself on a long bench outside his own property, smoking what is known in England as a long churchwarden: most wholesome of all pipes, it is said, for those who sacrifice to the fragrant weed. You, who know everything, may have heard the anecdote of Robert Hall. How a lady of his congregation one day went into his vestry and found him, as usual, smoking. "Ah, Mr. Hall," she cried, "at your idol again!" "Yes, ma'am," he replied; "*burning* him." But the idol burns on for ever.

So mine host was at his idol, the embodiment of calm, lazy contentment. Probably in this out-of-the-world spot, where nature seems to sleep her life away, he felt he could hardly do better than follow her example. As soon as I appeared he looked concerned.

"You surely haven't breakfasted already, sir?" he asked in tones of true feeling.

I assured him I had done so, and well.

"But it can't be well," he objected, "or you must have an amazing

small appetite. After such a drive as you've had and such a drive as you've got before you, it doesn't do not to lay in a good stock of fuel. Feed the furnace, and keep the engine going at full speed ; that's my motto. Now couldn't you go back and take a little more ? ”

I assured him this was impossible.

“ It isn't right,” he persisted, evidently mentally uncomfortable. “ I don't like it. I can't bear taking people's money if they haven't had their money's worth. It's as unpleasant as the opposite extreme—cooking food for people who bring their own provisions with them ; stale sandwiches, messy oranges and such-like. I always say live and let live, but these people want it all on one side, and that side their own. You have no idea, sir, the uncertainty of such a house as this. Sometimes you dress good, wholesome faring : a splendid leg of mutton or half a dozen fat fowls that yesterday were enjoying life in their own flighty way, and perhaps every traveller comes up with a bag of stale sandwiches—all the food they allow themselves on a fourteen hours' drive through fine bracing air. You, sir, if I might make the remark, by the way, look as if a spell of this bracing air—a few months or so—would do you no harm. You remind me a little of my old grandmother up in Scotland (I felt flattered) ; she was easily pressed down, poor old soul ; but then she was easily pulled up again. Now a few months of this Breakfast Vlei air——”

“ Would make a man of me,” I laughed, “ and then I should cease to remind you of your good old grandmother. If ever I visit South Africa again, a week at Breakfast Vlei shall be one of the items of the programme. But now, to change the subject, tell me the use of that little church I see close to your house ; and where the congregation come from ; and who ministers to you on a Sunday.”

“ Ah, sir, I don't wonder at your asking that question,” returned our interesting host. “ You see this great sweep of country, and never a habitation in sight to keep one company. But for all that we are not without neighbours ; ay, and white-faced neighbours too ; more than you'd think for. Not so very far off there's a small settlement, and we often muster quite a congregation on a Sunday ; and most Sundays we have a parson, morning or afternoon ; and we often have more people staying here than you'd fancy—some for the air, some for a little sport ; some for one thing, some for another. Only last week two ladies arrived, and were so taken with the place they said they should like to come again and stay a fortnight. I told them they'd be right welcome. But presently I overheard a little conversation between them. ‘ It's lovely bracing air, Jemima,’ said one ; ‘ I should really like to spend a week or two here. I think it would do us so much good.’ ‘ So do I, Keren-happuch,’ said the other old girl—what funny names they get hold of to be sure ! ‘ And though it's very

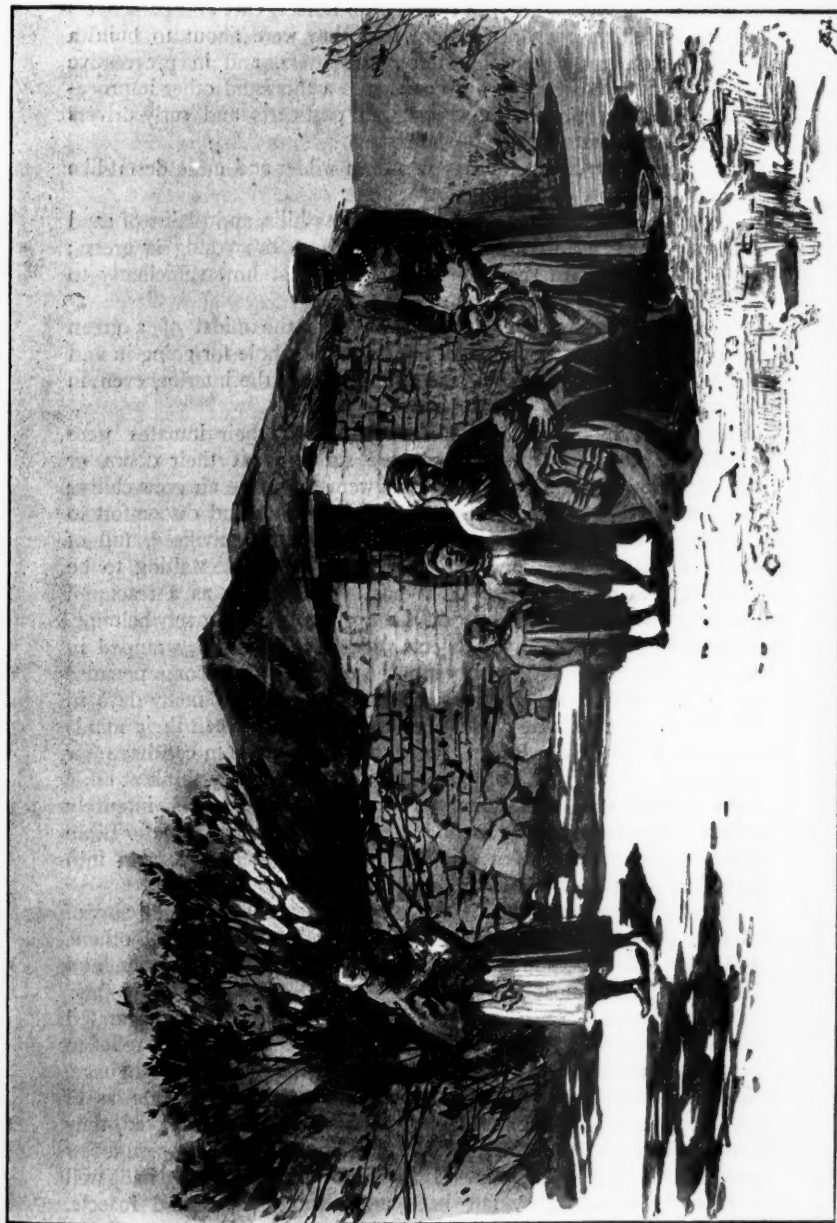
lonely, I think we should be safe,' she went on. 'The landlord looks a good moral sort of man; I don't think he would attempt to be too familiar. Do you?' 'We never know,' answered Jemima; 'but I flatter myself I know how to check undue familiarities.' Well, sir, I thought I should have died with trying not to laugh. The good old souls were both turned sixty, and wrinkled and grey; but law, some of the dear creatures think that they are like a green bay tree, beautiful for ever. So they are, bless them; but it's inward, not outward beauty. Time doesn't spare them any more than he spares mankind in general. Ungallant it may be, but it's true. And there's Sulky Jem putting his team together, so I suppose time's pretty well up. I call him Sulky Jem, but it may be Sulky Tom or Dick for all I know. I'm quite sure, now, sir, he's given you neither song, nor smile nor sermon coming along the road. Thank you, sir," as I paid our debt. "I feel as if I was robbing you, though I daresay the others have more than made up for your deficiency—not that that's altogether the right way of looking at it; but I think it's mostly the way in which the world makes both ends meet at the end of the year. Those who work hard and have money pay for those who don't; and so the great balance is struck."

Here our philosophic landlord bade us farewell, for the cart was ready, and if the fiery steeds were not pawing the ground with impatience, I daresay they had done so twenty years ago. The little church stood out in the immense plain as a warning that time was passing and the sun sets even on the longest life. We shall probably never see Breakfast Vlei again, but it was a small oasis in a wide desert, and made some impression upon us. A strange existence, this passing through life out of touch with the highways and byways of the world; seeing nothing of mankind excepting such as the chances of travel throw in one's path. The solitude of the tomb seems only a step further.

Away we went, exhilarated by a rest, the viands of the banqueting-hall, a new team. All this had not added to the amiability of Surly Solon, but we were now growing accustomed to his taciturnity, and the way in which he threw in the mail bags at the different stations regardless of life and limb. He had bargained to take the cart to King Williamstown; his passengers must look after themselves. Remonstrance was useless; with these natures, it only adds fuel to fire. Supposing you have a friendly neighbour whose dog keeps you awake all night, and you politely point out that you are slowly dying of want of sleep and irritation of the brain. He listens with the most earnest expression of condolence and regret, and you go on your way rejoicing; but the chances are that after that you will be kept awake by a maddening duet, whereas before there was only an irritating solo.

After Breakfast Vlei we made a steep descent to the Keiskamma River. This also was dry and rocky, and we crossed at a drift





SHEPHERD'S HUT.

without difficulty. When the river is full horses, cart and passengers have to be ferried over. We were told they were about to build a bridge, which would certainly improve matters, and in progressive South Africa of course this will come, with a thousand other improvements and luxuries. Let us hope that post-carts and surly drivers will be amongst the first if not the last.

The remainder of our journey was even wilder and more desert-like than ever.

Desert-like in its solitude, not from endless hills, and plains of sand such as one meets in the Great Sahara. Here everything is green; soft and soothing to the eye, which knows not how sufficiently to take in all the wild and desolate beauty.

Now and then we came upon a kraal in the midst of a green plain; a few dome-shaped mud erections with a hole for going in and out. One shuddered at the close atmosphere of the interior, even in this wonderful air.

Some of the kraals looked deserted, as if their inmates were sleeping or away; at others they were squatting at their doors, or in a circle round a fire—for as the sun went down the air grew chilly; and a very slight fall in temperature means winter and discomfort to these dark, scantily-clad Kaffirs, barbarous and uncivilised, full of cruelty towards each other; a great crowd of people waiting to be humanised and converted. What has been done is as a teacupful of water to the ocean, but no doubt the difficulties are overwhelming. Occasionally, we saw ghastly objects with faces whitened, wrapped in their blankets, "wandering away into the wilderness" on some penance demanded by their superstitious religion, there to pass many days in solitude: one can hardly add meditation, for what can their minds consist of? Even the most intelligent amongst them can have few ideas, and strange must be their thoughts of life if they think at all.

As twilight fell these solitary creatures made one feel intensely melancholy, and somehow reminded one of that passage in the Bible where the scapegoat, laden with the sins of the people, is sent into the wilderness to die.

But this poor, barbarous Kaffir race, has no doubt enough sins of its own to atone for without burdening itself with those of others. Still they are not cannibals, and compared with the Bushmen and Hottentots, are almost civilised.

The latter are the primitive races of South Africa, widely separated from each other, yet descended from a common origin. It is a relief to hear that both Bushmen and Hottentots are dying out. Their language, like themselves, is primitive, consisting as much of sounds as of words, the latter only monosyllabic. Going about almost naked, they never build houses or huts, but sleep on the bare earth or on a few dried sticks thrown together. If game and milk can be had, well and good; if not, they fall back upon roots, herbs and insects. They think nothing of killing a human being: and if you meet one

unexpectedly in the veldt you must either put a bullet into him, or he will put an arrow into you with fatal and most unerring aim.

The Kaffirs, with all their barbarous ways are very different from this: well-built, powerful men, who will treat you civilly, are sensible of kindness, and possess, to some extent, civilised laws. They have a religion of their own, but are full of superstition, believe in witchcraft, and make free use of the accusation against anyone they may want to put to death. The tortures introduced at such times are terrible. This is the power of the "witch doctors."

These tribes are about 600,000 in number. It is only about seventy-five years since missionaries first began to work amongst them, and their progress has been very slow and limited, for want of both Government and private support. They are still for the most part very much in heathendom; without real religion, without morality, full of savage customs, unenlightened and cruel.

As we passed along the road, these occasional kraals, especially in the twilight, looked weird and desolate. There is something incomprehensible, inexpressibly depressing, in the existence and condition of these human beings, with all their undeveloped capacities, their animal modes of life, throwing themselves down at night like sheep and dogs, and rising in the morning with no idea of life's best work: thinking only how they shall that day find their bread or rid themselves of a troublesome neighbour. To them life has no responsibilities, beyond that of the heathen: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Now and then Surly Solon would throw a word to one and another, receiving an answer that sounded like an explosion of mild crackers. He was evidently more in sympathy with them than with his travellers.

Once we passed a shepherd's hut which looked rather more substantially built, though much after the same pattern. Dark-skinned, thick-lipped women sat outside with children playing about, and as we passed they gave us a very decided nod, and a grin that showed a wide mouth and set of teeth which fairly made us shudder. It was all meant for friendliness, and the minister behind us gave them a friendly word, which we were glad to hear. These wayside greetings may touch hidden chords and do good: give rise to a wish for something better than this brutish condition; unconscious aspirations that may even be counted as a prayer. They have souls, these poor, benighted heathen, though their expressions are limited; there must be times when their souls awake to consciousness, and make themselves dimly, vaguely, uncomfortably heard.

We journeyed onwards, always onwards, always through the same green plains and undulations, boundless, unlimited.

At last we came to Iquibeka, and here seemed quite a small colony. The surrounding country, a series of vast undulations rich and

green, is said to be some of the best pasturage in all Cape Colony. On the top of one of the undulations was a large, wooden shanty, well built, well kept, well painted : the inevitable post-office. Near it were one or two well-conditioned wooden houses, always in the form of bungalows, surrounded by flourishing gardens with dwarf trees, and a profusion of flowers : a small paradise in the midst of a desert.

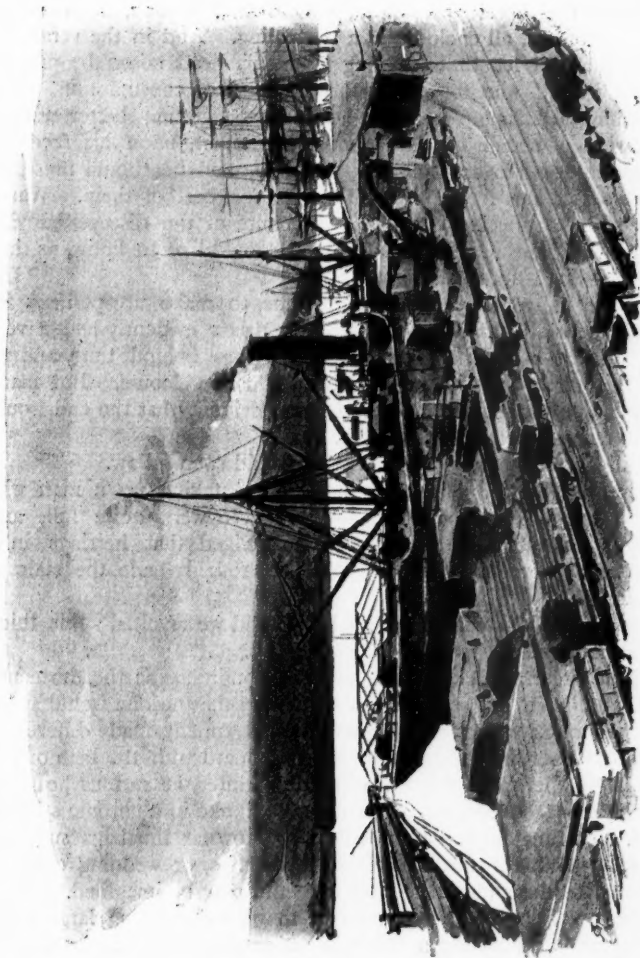
Down a sloping road we walked for a quarter of a mile up to the "hotel," with which we were not greatly taken, though the "bar" seemed well supplied with every wine, spirit and liqueur under the sun. Here we had some good tea—for it was the tea hour of the afternoon—and a mysterious cake of the country, about which we asked no questions, lest its merits should evaporate : like that excellent soup that in the far-off days was served day after day to some delighted naval officers in distant seas, and was daily praised, until accident discovered the soup to be made from cormorants : when the charm was broken, the doctor was hastily summoned, and several deaths ensued. We are all creatures of fancy, and all know that at times 'tis folly to be wise."

Whilst waiting—we halted nearly an hour in this oasis—a wild party of some half dozen men in blankets and head adornments came winding up the road. They turned out to be a small company of Zulus passing through the country, and making their way to a drinking shed near the hotel, looked wonderfully picturesque and effective ; tall, well-built men, with perfect limbs and chests that anyone might envy ; eyes full of fire and intelligence, betraying energy, and a temper dangerous when roused ; but *unroused*, full of amiability and good humour, as the Zulus almost always are. As far as our limited experience has gone, the Zulus seem the finest, most intelligent, most amiable of all the South African tribes ; and well taken in hand, civilised, Christianised, would prove "wood that would bear carving."

There appears to be quite a small colony at Iquibeka, probably of farmers, for the sake of the matchless pasture. But the few people we saw looked more like horse-dealers or betting men, with the peculiar air which distinguishes these gentry ; hanging about the hotel like birds of passage. No doubt the few real settlers were elsewhere, at work and out of sight. Possibly, too, there are farms about the country we knew nothing about ; but, gathered together, forming a fair population. It was certainly the only spot we passed on the road that looked in the least inhabited.

Presently Surly Solon was ready, and we had to be ready also. He would wait long enough to suit his own pleasure, but not one moment for ours, and if we had not been at hand when the horn blew, would certainly have gone without us. Away we went once more, our horses full of mettle, prancing and cutting capers. Where the energy came from, poor, lean cattle, we knew not. But we made good way. Here the road was less evident, and we often found our-

selves bowling for miles over the soft springy turf, nothing, as it seemed, but faint tracks along the grass to tell us that we were in the right path. We came upon more kraals, more shepherds' huts, all



HARBOUR, EAST LONDON.

few and far between, breaking in upon, never relieving the desolation of the drive.

Finally we reached Debe Nek, the last station ; where we found an hotel, built upon the usual lines : a sort of bungalow, with a wide verandah. A faint idea of a settlement also : a store, which seemed to deal in everything under the sun, though the population to be

supplied was of course invisible. But the owner looked happy and flourishing, as if he were very quickly making a large fortune, and meant presently to come back to England and get knighted and go into Parliament.

Before the hotel was quite a cultivated garden, with sweet-smelling flowers, all enclosed in a low paling. And in the verandah, reclining at full length on a long chair, his head raised by pillows, was an invalid who looked in the last stage of consumption. The only thing that made us hope he might be getting better was an expression of serene content, almost merriment, upon his face; as though things were looking up with him, and he should presently take his part and lot in the world with the best of them. Was it really so? Or was it the cruel-kindly nature of the disease buoying him up with false hopes to the last? I should like to know, as time goes on—but I never shall know.

For we halted only a very short time, to make up perhaps for the longer spell at Iquibeka, where the driver evidently had a very large visiting acquaintance. Surly Solon was behind time, and we were beginning to feel that the end would be welcome. But many miles had still to be traversed, and it was evident that the end would not be reached before nine o'clock.

Twilight, too, was falling; darkness would soon follow.

Here, too, Surly Solon would insist upon taking up a man who wanted to go to King Williamstown. We were quite full, and although on our small seat were so wedged that herrings in a barrel never were packed more closely, he roughly bade the stalwart intruder "shake himself down."

But human endurance has its limits, and we revolted; this thing should not be.

The intruder, as welcome under such conditions as the thirteenth guest at dinner, was sensible enough to see that no one would suffer from the arrangement more than he, and quietly made himself a comfortable seat between us and the dashboard with the help of the letter-bags, where with a gun awkwardly pointed at various heads in turn, he managed to keep everyone wide awake in a chronic state of terror. Fortunately it never went off. How far the bags suffered, especially if any of them contained love-letters, or wedding cake, or any other tender and delicate article, could only be imagined.

Close to Debe Nek, they seemed to be constructing large engineering works; building a bridge, or something of that sort, and a number of mechanics, as the sun went down, were just giving up work. Evidently in South Africa they know nothing of the eight hours movement. Here we are at the base of the Amatola Mountains, whose wooded heights stretch their heads afar off; and here much sport may be had, so that our intrusive friend had probably found his gun very useful quite apart from the excitement of killing—by fright or otherwise—human beings. Round



about us the undulations were more marked, and that was the only difference in the features of the landscape.

But presently there came one of the finest sunset effects ever seen in this world. Twilight was creeping over the earth. The plains were growing dark and mysterious: that wonderful tone which thrills every artistic nerve we possess. Above, the sky was still light, and stretching far upwards from the west, were the most wonderful clouds, the highest, most ethereal, most golden you can imagine, an exact counterfeit presentment of the ruins of some glorious ancient city. It might have been a mirage, but more gorgeous and splendid than any mirage ever witnessed. Crumbling temples, fallen pillars, and crowds of desolated thoroughfares, were all outlined in these magic celestial pencillings. Then as the sun sank yet further from the horizon, the gold changed to crimson, and the whole ruined city appeared on fire: until presently the flames died down, and everything was blotted out in the darkness of night. No doubt this remarkable sunset, which seemed almost phenomenal, was indicative of the terrible weather even then about to arise, but we knew nothing of this. We only saw in it something which glorified our drive; a scene never to be forgotten; a sunset perhaps never to be equalled.

Darkness fell, and dreary and desolate but full of nameless charm were the plains. More strange, more appealing than ever, were the few solitary Kaffir huts we passed; more desolate and terrible the solitary figures wandering away into the wilderness. The stars came out and flashed as they can only flash in this atmosphere; but the moon had not risen, and it was often so dark that Surly Solon could not always tell whether he was on the road or off it. After the sun went down it grew chilly, and we, lightly clad, having seen no banqueting-hall since all those past hours at Breakfast Vlei, began to feel the wisdom of our philosophic host's remarks, and again "wished for the end."

It would not come any the sooner, and the last part of the drive seemed the longest.

Yet it had its compensation; dark plains full of mystery, full of meaning and solemnity; an apparently endless world, in which the vast silence was only broken by our travelling. Here and there in the distance, the fires of the Kaffir kraals blazed up and threw their reflections to the skies: and, faintly outlined, the dark people might be seen squatting round them, no doubt shivering in their blankets, and waiting their hour for turning in.

Once we passed very near to one of these fires, where the Kaffirs sat round in their witch-like circle; and as the flames flew and flickered and lighted up their faces, they looked, with their huge mouths and flashing eyes, like demons assisting at some fearful holocaust.

A strange sight, this condition and state of existence, this dark-

raced people, squatting in the midst of these far-off solitudes of earth, watching the flames they had kindled rising heavenwards; chattering amidst themselves with rasping voices and gestures that every moment seemed to threaten sudden death to their neighbour, though probably they were only meant to express a rude affection.

We have to see these conditions of life to realise them; and there would be infinite pain in the sight if it were not that one feels how the back is fitted to the burden; how these rude barbarians are happy in their own way; know nothing better, desire nothing better; ask of life nothing more than a blanket, and hunger satisfied, and a mud hut to shelter from the cold.

As to their conversion, it would be a good thing undoubtedly, but, as far as one can gather, it is being done in a very half-hearted manner. And then—give them new thoughts, new hopes, new aspirations, and you must alter their condition of life. What would you do with them? But no doubt a way would be opened up; necessity would find the remedy. After all, I am not sure that we have not worse heathens at home; where conversion properly taken in hand ought only to be a work of time; yet generations succeed each other, and it is not done. If we take the trouble to search, we shall discover sights and sounds almost within our gates that would eclipse anything found amongst these natives of South Africa, who will only be judged according to their lights.

So we thought and felt as we journeyed, now losing our track and bowling over the green turf, whose undulations often threatened to overturn us; now finding our way back into the high road; ever and again meeting a team of oxen drawing a huge waggon. On each of these occasions there had to be shouts and signals, until the whole team was brought to a standstill whilst we passed. Most of the waggons were white and covered; but once or twice we came upon a huge uncovered cart crowded with noisy dark people; and we wondered whether here, too, these people pack up and move from kraal to kraal, or go in for moonlight flittings, or take excursions for the benefit of their health. On what mission could they possibly be bound? From our surly driver we could learn nothing.

At last we saw, afar off on our right, the twinkling lights of King Williamstown: a welcome sight at this untoward hour.

What we found when we finally reached them I cannot tell you now; but I may tell you to-morrow, if we are yet prisoners in East London. For we are still here, and I have beguiled the hours in writing to you. Could I have done better in this hope-forsaken place?

For still the elements are raging, if possible worse than ever; and they have been raging ever since we arrived yesterday morning. I then thought they had reached the height of fury, but I was mistaken. The constant downpour of rain threatens another deluge;

people look anxiously at each other as if they feared a visitation. It has been said that rain calms the sea ; I will never believe it again. The waves are running mountains high ; they are thundering upon the shore ; they dash over the pier and breakwater, which must have foundations solid as the earth itself, to stand these mighty



ROCKS THAT WITHSTOOD THE STORM.

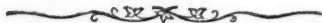
shocks. The spray, white and beautiful, seems to reach to the heavens, as wave upon wave beats and breaks upon the shore with a sound of artillery a million times magnified.

The rain ceases at intervals ; and in those intervals H. and I go down to the harbour, and venture as far as the breaking seas and stormy winds will allow us ; and it is ever the same awful, fearful,

glorious and magnificent sight. If we only had comfortable quarters, and were not in hourly dread of seeing the *Dunottar* suddenly turn and disappear towards Durban, how we should feast and revel in this wonderful conflict of the elements. Never but once have I seen anything finer: when in my boyhood's home, one severe winter, the sea was frozen far out, and huge blocks of ice rose up like little hills, hill beyond hill, and the very waves seemed to have petrified in the act of breaking.

But there is no freezing to-day, though the air is by no means tropical, and there the good *Dunottar* rides upon the storm like a thing of life, buoyant as a bubble, proud in her strength. If only she will so remain until that terrible signal cone falls, and announces our deliverance. But will she do this?

For the hours are running on, and the hurricane seems unwilling to stay its mighty hand, and there is a limit even to the patience of long-suffering.



### WESTWARD!

TELL me, thou burning sky,  
Where like a king the day  
In gold lies down to die,  
What lands beyond thee lie—  
Teach me the way.

Think not I'll mind the cost,  
Look back once I begin;  
Let me go where thou goest,  
Were it to Eden lost  
Through Adam's sin.

Thou who so far from men  
Shinest, yet seem'st so near,  
Heav'n needs thee not! Oh, then,  
Remain with us—remain  
For ever here!

JULIA KAVANAGH.

## DUNSTAN'S AMBASSADOR.

A ROMANCE IN COLLEGE.

PROFESSOR OLIVER JEFFERIES sat in his college study one June afternoon; a tap at the door, and his friend Alfred Dunstan entered.

Alfred Dunstan was, like himself, a bachelor and a Fellow of his college, but he was round-about, florid and short-sighted; irreverend youth called him "Tubby" Dunstan; Oliver Jefferies was slight, tall, and though unmistakably shy, distinguished-looking. The friends nodded, and Dunstan took a chair.

"I have called to consult you," he said, in his piping voice.

"I am at your service," Jefferies answered in his rather hollow tone; there was a mellow echo in his voice which was very effective, especially when he had nothing important to say.

"It is rather a delicate affair," Dunstan went on, fanning his round pink cheeks with his cap; "the fact is, my mother, you know my mother?"—branching off somewhat irrelevantly.

"Yes, I know your mother," Jefferies assented, in a voice which recalled responses in church; Mrs. Dunstan was an oppressive old lady who had come to live near her son when he got his Fellowship at St. Anthony's: she said very little, sighed a good deal, and had the bearing of a depressed white caterpillar.

"My mother wishes—you know what mothers are!—that I should—ahem—that I should——"

"Be vaccinated again. I think she is right—there is so much small-pox about everywhere," Jefferies said.

"Nothing of the sort," Dunstan answered testily; everyone, even people who stammer, resents having their sentences finished for them; "my mother is very anxious to see me married!"

Oliver Jefferies said nothing, which was distinctly unkind, and his friend continued hurriedly,

"You see, I am the last of our family; there have been Dunstans of Devil's Dyke for the last thousand years; we claim descent from a nephew of the saint, and naturally my mother wishes—why the deuce don't you say something, Jefferies?"

"I was waiting to hear your mother's wishes," the professor answered gravely.

"Well, she naturally does not want the race to die out," Mr. Dunstan concluded with a defiant air.

"She would like you to marry," Jefferies repeated musingly; the idea was new to him—none of the Fellows of St. Anthony's had married during his time: to think of little Dunstan taking the lead in this way!

"It is a strange notion," he went on, looking stedfastly at his visitor; "have you thought of anyone in particular, a concrete wife, or is it still an abstract——?"

"Hang it all, Jefferies, you are rather a wet blanket," cried poor Dunstan, taking out his large Irish linen handkerchief and dabbing his forehead excitedly.

"I thought as we had always been so intimate, that I would come to you for advice and help, but you aren't very encouraging, and—and you seem to think I don't know in the least how to set about it!"

"Forgive me," said his friend gently, "I am really interested, but the idea has come to me with all the force of novelty, and I should be, myself, so at a loss to proceed in such a case that perhaps I unintentionally underrated your ability to deal with it. Pray continue, my dear fellow, and let me hear what steps you intend to take to—er—reorganise your family. I might know, very well, that a Dunstan will never lack initiative."

Little Dunstan appeared pleased with this explanation, yet he coughed and was somewhat slow to go on.

"The fact is, Jefferies, that even I, who may reasonably be supposed to have inherited, in a special manner, the necessary nerve for an emergency, find myself a little uncertain how to act. You see, I've never done it before, Jefferies; I could, I am positive, propose for another fellow very tellingly—for you, Jefferies, for instance, but for myself there is a diffidence, a——"

"A diffidence which in a Fellow of St. Anthony is wholly out of place," cried his companion; "as to proposing for me to anyone, you must not think of such a thing. I have nothing to offer a lady in comparison with your ancient and honourable name (the judge with whom we are remotely connected was far from being any recommendation to a family man). Your position at the University, your own genial nature, and your mother's affectionate welcome and sympathy. But I give you my heartiest good wishes, and I feel assured that when these advantages are laid before any lady she will not reject them."

"That's just it," Dunstan rejoined, excitedly. "That is where you come in, my dear Jefferies. You see, I can't very well go myself to the young lady, and say, 'My family is of a thousand years' standing, my record in the University is second to none, my mother is very anxious to receive you, and would give us all the necessary linen and plate; I am the easiest person in the world to live with, and it is a hundred pities that I should be the last of my race.' Such an address would not only sound very inflated, but might perhaps offend her delicacy of sensibility. But if a friend, such as yourself, were to undertake the mission, and insinuate tactfully that a man of rare birth and breeding, a Fellow of his college, blessed with an affectionate parent and the wherewithal for a refined and congenial home (you've never seen my mother's rat-tailed forks, Jefferies), was likely to be the last of his name and stock unless she accepted him—this would be a



testimony that the most fastidious female could scarcely take exception at. And for the man in question, think of the relief, all plain-sailing then, the ground cleared by a skilful, diplomatic friend. Just say you'll do it for me, Jefferies?" cried Dunstan, dropping his hypothetical case and coming to sheer downright entreaty. "You shall have my everlasting gratitude, and my little Aldine 'Horace' that you've always envied, and I'll do as much for you, I swear I will, whenever you require it."

"Heaven forbid," cried Oliver, but though the idea of prosecuting Dunstan's wooing for him almost took away his breath, he did not altogether repudiate it. No man cares to confess himself less courageous in such matters than he is supposed to be, and the very singularity of the enterprise had a strange attraction for the shy man, notwithstanding that he shrank from an ordinary dinner-party or morning call as from an epidemic; Dunstan saw his advantage and pressed it.

"You've only got to get her alone for a few minutes—you can choose your own time, I'm in no special hurry, and sound her about me; the thing is simplicity itself for a third party, and you'll soon see which way the wind blows," he answered his friend. Somehow, before he was quite aware of it himself, Jefferies had consented.

"By-the-bye, you haven't told me who the lady is."

"Can't you guess?" said Dunstan, with a simper.

Oliver reflected. He had visited once or twice at the house of old Mrs. Dunstan, but he did not remember to have remarked any special intimacy between that lady and any others of the University set; neither could he identify any particular Queen of the Revels in connection with Dunstan's own modest lunches and teas at his rooms in college during the May week. But as the lover seemed expectant he hazarded, "Miss Lindley?"

Miss Lindley was the Principal of Zenobia Hall where Dunstan occupied the mathematical chair, and was a lady in every way fitted to become the wife of a professor, which is saying a good deal.

"Good gracious, no!" cried Dunstan, quite snappishly, "Miss Lindley must be thirty-five, if she's a day, and my mother would never permit me to introduce a second professor into our family. What do you say to Miss Baby Primrose?"

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After Dunstan had left, Jefferies began mechanically to dress himself in the conventional garb which society demands of the afternoon caller, revolving in his mind the subject of his friend's wooing. It was extraordinary, almost uncanny that Alfred's choice should have fallen on little Baby Primrose, the girl of all others furthest removed from the serious life and interests of the University, under whose shadow she had sprung up, like her pushing, unabashed flower namesake, staring out of the crevice of some reverend pile of building.

The girl who spent all the summer days playing tennis with under-

graduates, who whispered at lectures, and laughed outright during the performance of Greek tragedies ; who seemed to regard the glorious Alma Mater herself as a mere institution to provide herself and her sisters with balls and boat-races, flirtation and frivolity ! Why, the very evening before Jefferies had met her at a Don's drum and had been unwillingly drawn into her vortex ; for some freak, she had dismissed the half-dozen boys who surrounded her, and had insisted on establishing herself on a distant and conspicuous sofa with Oliver, where she had plied him with conversation on lines altogether novel to the Professor.

In the course of it he discovered that for aught Miss Primrose knew to the contrary, the sun went round the earth, once a day, or once a year, she was not very sure which ; that Sir Isaac Newton discovered steam engines, the circulation of the blood, and American apples ; and that Lord Byron, among certain undesirable works, wrote 'Our Boys,' which was a perfect gem, and fit for any one to enjoy. All this store of learning Miss Primrose imparted to her companion with such a battery of funny little arch shrugs of her white shoulders, such merry and yet wistful glances of her violet eyes, such candid interjections as, "I know I'm not a bit clever, but one can't live in a place like this without picking up some little scraps of information on deep subjects !" that Jefferies, apostle of thoroughness as he was, had been interested against his will. "In my inmost heart, Mr. Jefferies (only you mustn't repeat this to anybody), I have always longed to be a Zenobia Hall student, only how could mother manage that with six of us girls, besides the three boys ? So I've just had to give up that dream, and stick to cooking and shirtmaking and sock-mending ! It is only when I get a chance of talking to a man like you, that for an instant I realise what the ideal life of intellect means to those who are free to follow it ! And oh, Mr. Jefferies, that reminds me, are you coming down to the tennis-ground to-morrow afternoon ?"

Jefferies had come away from the Don's drum at eleven o'clock, strangely and unusually moved. It seemed as if he had looked behind a veil into a hitherto unsuspected votive chapel, where the dreams and ambitions of a young life had been laid down, and the burden of domestic duties and household mending had been cheerfully taken up instead. Mrs. Primrose, though she had painstakingly married several of her elder daughters, had still a large family to support on very slender means. Well, if he proved an astute ambassador, there would be another anxiety off the good lady's shoulders ; if Miss Baby longed for the educational advantages of Zenobia Hall, surely the undisputed profession of its mathematical professor would satisfy her wildest dreams ? Dunstan was a good little fellow, and Jefferies would do his best for him—it was a pity he was so short, and tubby, and red in the face, and had that terribly unattractive black-bombazine mother, in her Berlin-wool-worked drawing-room, to back him up ! Oliver could not but recognise that

Miss Baby, with all her ignorances, was a lover of the beautiful ; every touch of her little dimpled hands on the cluster of white peonies at her waistband, every glance of her eyes, and every childish enthusiastic word as she described the sunset after the thunderstorm on Monday, came back to him, as he rummaged fiercely for a certain cream-coloured necktie to replace his sober black scarf ; one does not go out deliberately to woo (even for somebody else) every day in the week, and "where on earth has that tie got to ? there seems nothing but socks that want mending !" groaned the professor, and then found himself blushing at a foolish association of irrelevant ideas.

However, he was ready at last, and glancing deprecatingly in the glass, saw the reflection of a very gentlemanly figure—tall, slight, intellectual-looking, a little pensive perhaps as befits the heroic leader of such an embassy : he would do his utmost for Dunstan's suit.

\* \* \* \*

"So you've come, after all !" cried Baby Primrose joyfully, as Oliver picked his way somewhat self-consciously round the tennis-lawn to her seat : "I hardly dared hope you would, because I was afraid I had been too—well, had bored you too much last night, but all the same, I——" She did not finish her sentence, but looked down suddenly, and twisted the bangle on her little round wrist.

"I came because I wanted to continue our conversation," said the professor, going straight to the point.

"Did you ? then you weren't bored ?" cried Baby, looking up for a moment with delighted eyes. "No, I won't play just at present, thank you," addressing a host of advancing parti-coloured flannelled boys ; "I am tired, and the sun is very glaring ; if you will play a gentlemen's sett, and let me rest a little, I shall be quite fresh by-and-by," and she led the way to a seat a little apart from the group where her mother dispensed easy chaperonage to the assembled young people.

"You spoke last night of having wished to become a student at Zenobia Hall," Jefferies began, seeing his way clearly to the introduction of Dunstan by this conversational channel ; a sudden, quick glance from Baby's violet eyes—was there a shade of disappointment in them ?—disconcerted him, and he hurried on, rather inconsequently, "I have been thinking ever since, that is to say, it has been suggested to me—that there is another way of attaining that knowledge to which you feel you might have devoted yourself, had you not been held back by—by family circumstances. If you found, for instance, that, that——"

"Yes ?" put in Baby with a little thrill of curiosity in her voice.

"That a man—a professor, let us say—who had hitherto only loved learning for its own sake, was beginning to realise that in imparting all he knew to one other—yourself—he would be satisfying a yearning which had long oppressed him with its vague unrest ; if you knew that such a one distinguished you among all the other women who

surrounded his successful path, that he longed to share with you the treasures of his mind, the position which his talents have won for him, the ancient name whose honour he has held unsullied——” Jefferies paused to take breath—he could not, no, he could not, touch more particularly on old Mrs. Dunstan and her Berlin-wool-work welcome.

“Yes,” said Baby again, but this time so softly, so faintly, that the monosyllable merely sighed past Jefferies’ ear like a breath of the summer breeze——“go on.”

“If someone told you all this,” Oliver continued, warming to his subject as he saw himself now within reach of the goal, “would you be content to forego the girlish excitements and interests that have hitherto claimed your attention? Could you place your hand in his and say, ‘Henceforward your aims, your aspirations are mine; mould me, make me what you will, not a mere Zenobia Hall student dabbling on the outskirts of wisdom, but a real woman—a professor’s wife?’”

There was a moment’s silence. Some pigeons began to coo on the wall of St. Anthony’s behind them, a cry of “Love one” rang out in front. Baby Primrose looked up, and putting her little warm, pink hand into Oliver’s, she whispered,

“Take me, make me what you will!”

Then Oliver saw he had blundered. He made one gallant effort to put matters straight, though with Baby’s hand fast held, and her shoulder so close to his it was a desperate move, but honour, friendship, and the little Aldine ‘Horace’ swayed him still.

“You know Dunstan,” he murmured with dry lips, “Alfred Dunstan of St. Anthony’s and Zenobia Hall, he and I have always been close friends, and I feel indeed——”

“Of course I know Mr. Dunstan,” Baby answered; “he has always bored me horribly; but if he is a friend of yours I will do my best to like him. You don’t think I am the sort of woman, Oliver dear, who could be disagreeable to her husband’s old chums? Poor little fat Mr. Dunstan—‘Tubby’ the boys call him, you know—he shall never feel that his friend’s wife has deprived him of his friend. He has enough to try him already in that dismal old woman, his mother, and if you are fond of him, there must be some good in him for me to find out. Dearest, that is just what I have felt about myself ever since I thought that you first began to care about me!”

After that, Jefferies struggled no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

There has been a coolness between Jefferies and Dunstan since the former married, and the little Aldine ‘Horace’ has certainly never changed hands; but Oliver is another man since the Primroses took him so heartily into their family circle, and report says that Alfred is courting Miss Lindley of Zenobia Hall himself.

G. B. STUART.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES OF A GUINEA PIG.

By C. J. LANGSTON.

THAT Church Building Society which hesitated to confirm a grant to me in 1877, because I had "made the inclination of the seats too comfortable," would be highly gratified at the discomfort I have experienced in sundry prayer-desks and pulpits.

The former are usually now placed at the entrance to the chancel, and so cribbed, cabined, and confined, owing to the extension of choir stalls, and the inrush of cherubs in surplices, that I never felt so much what Sheridan termed "altogethery" in my life. I cannot move without treading on my neighbour's toes, or sending stray leaves of special anthems flying and fluttering like dead leaves in December.

Such close companionship has other drawbacks: for at St. M. N. I impinged on the alto, a stout carpenter, who had sought to strengthen his vocal chords by a liberal allowance of raw onion, whilst on a bench just beneath me sat two sweet little songsters partial to paregoric. At quaint K. the chancel was restored, an elaborate wrought-iron screen erected with expensive choir seats: when, at the last moment, it was found that the entrance to the prayer-desk had been forgotten, therefore hinges came to the rescue, and the front opens like a door. Once bolted in, there is safety; but any pressure against the book ledge, unless the bolt is securely fastened, will cause an unseemly sprawl, and an involuntary obeisance to my Lord H. just opposite.

A common mistake of architects is still further to lessen the book board by placing crockets and finials at each end. Such obstructives to sound and sight are highly objectionable. The space is cramped, the fine old service books are discarded for inferior ones with small type and thin leaves that stick together, and I am puzzled where to place banns-book, hymn-book, and notices. Only the other evening, when diving behind me for the Church Hymnal, the slip on which the hymns were noted got lost in a labyrinth of leaves. After turning over many a new leaf with whirlwind rapidity, and magnifying that awful pause, I found, just in the nick of time, the concealed treasure.

More trying still are the narrow strips of wood covered with a semblance of carpet which some of the clergy deem decorous for kneeling boards; as if devotion were quickened by having one's shins barked, or a stinging pain in the knees. Occasionally these instruments of torture are loose, and cause a spasmodic jerk in the petitions by a sudden tilt up; or they are placed so far beneath the desk that the muscles are strained in the effort to keep on.

Our Nonconformist brethren have the advantage of us in their roomy platforms for preaching. I doubt if Diogenes would have become

famous with only half a tub : and what can be expected from a parson pinioned in a packing-case. I have just returned from High Littleton. In the church every prospect pleases, and only the pulpit, so fair to look upon, is vile ; the architect having contrived to enclose it within the sharp, projecting mouldings of an arch, leaving the unfortunate preacher but a few inches wherein to follow the Demosthenic dictum—action—action. If I moved, there was a stone cutting my back, if I raised my hand to point a moral, a sharper point impaled my fingers. If in avoiding Scylla I sailed to the entrance, there was the Charybdis of unprotected steps : so that the poetry of motion had to subside into dull mechanic exercise. I well remember the carved oak pulpit at Smeeth, with its huge sounding-board and tortuous steps, which encroached so greatly that little standing-room was left, and the least lateral movement made me shudder on the brink of a downfall ; and that still more ancient pulpit at Brook, so narrow that it could only have been made for a sandwich man, or some ascetic monk who answered to the definition of a line.

How amusing was the experience of poor little R. J. of the C. M. S. ! The vicar of a Cheshire parish where I was about to preach had invented a contrivance on the screw principle, by which the clerk could either raise or lower the floor of the pulpit to any level. "During the hymn," said J. (a total abstainer), "I felt myself 'screwed' for the first time, and the idiot did not stop until my knees were visible ; when, seeing his mistake, I came down with a run which did not lessen the too audible titter, or my own confusion and fright."

He added, that on another occasion, three disused hassocks gave him the proper elevation. These proved so unsteady that he was obliged to grasp the pulpit ledge with one hand, and during the sermon, needing this to find a reference, the top hassock glided backwards, and he suddenly disappeared with a bang, Bible and all. When Robert bobbed up again he was in one sense considerably *lowered* in the estimation of the auditory : or, as the churchwarden observed, "the man, not the sermon, was shorter."

An amusing arrangement still exists at St. James's Church, Bath. Before the sermon, the pulpit, a veritable Jack-in-the-box, is wheeled to the east end of the nave, and after the fifthly has been disposed of, is duly trundled back again.

Some years ago, the curate in charge of this church was Mr. Warner, an intimate friend of Dr. Samuel Parr, who complained that during the recital of the creeds no one could be heard but the clerk, who would persist in rushing far ahead of him in the responses. When the lisping lullaby of the learned doctor was heard in St. James's pulpit there was "silence for a space," for the Bathonians remembered that the little great man had recently bearded the Chief Justice in open court at Warwick, answered the "What? What?" of "Farmer George" with more than courtly



candour, and would have been a bishop but for demonstrative Whiggism.

The sliding brass rod supporting the stand by which the height of the manuscript can be regulated is convenient; but it is well to ascend the pulpit and test its capacity before service, for often there is a screw loose. Leaving the adjustment to others, more than once when pressing the leaf of my sermon, the whole thing has rattled down to the socket with a rush which thrilled me with consternation; and a friend not noticing that a second mechanical arrangement to alter the inclination of the sermon-rest was not fixed, had no sooner waxed eloquent than his MS. went flying over the pulpit on to some feathery hats below. Not having the readiness of Dean Stanley, on a similar mishap, to improvise until its recovery, he stood quietly until a blushing damsel handed it up.

More awkward was the dilemma of my old tutor, the Rev. J. F., who discovered just before afternoon service that he had left his discourse at home.

He knew exactly where the precious MS. must be, but could the rustic nimble-toes, however fleet, accomplish the considerable distance in thirty-five minutes? The lessons were short—his hopes centred in the two hymns, the old-fashioned choir harking back at every second line, and lingering with loving tenderness on the last syllable, and the harmonionist delighted in voluntaries. Never had he read more deliberately, or with greater regard to punctuation. As Farmer Bourne said, "It wer like a traction ingen a goin' up Broadway 'Ill!" Many a furtive glance when the spacious door creaked; many an anxious thought as the state prayers ended. And now the second hymn is given out, two more verses only, and—but, oh, rapture! the west door flies open as if impelled by a boot, "and fills with light the intervals of sound" below the singing-gallery; a youth appears, wiping his forehead with one hand, in the other bearing aloft triumphantly, "plain for all folks to see," a roll of paper, as he strides up to the reading-desk—"A reprieve," thought J. F., "just in time."

A somewhat similar incident occurred to me when taking duty at Painswick and Pitchcombe.

Just before leaving home I directed a newly-arrived man-servant to carry my hand-bag to the Great Western Station, and wait on the platform, where I shortly arrived with my niece. Alas! "I could not see my little friend, because he was not there." We scanned every likely and unlikely place. Could he have gone to the Midland Station?

The train came in, I rushed up and down, peering anxiously among the crowd, lingered at the carriage-door till I was slammed in—just had time to hand the key to my niece with directions to send the MSS. by post—although I doubted their timely delivery—and then we were off; I to a remote village among strangers, without a particle

of luggage; and, worse luck, minus my sermons. It is all in the volume of life, thought I, but I *should* like to slip this chapter.

Arrived at Stroud, I was directed to a homely hostelry, where an ancient carrier's cart, with benches round three sides, was already packed inside and out. The bulky ladies inside had equally bulky parcels, lightly covered with brown paper which rubbed off at every unusual jolt, when the sharp angles of dutch-ovens and other tinware indented my knees, whilst streaky samples from the meat market rolled into my lap. "Aggrawashun in a cart is *so* aggrawating," quoth William Marigold; and it was a relief when I could be handed out with other miscellaneous articles at Painswick.

"Where are your things?" said my clerical host. I could not even exclaim with John Gilpin—"They are upon the road!"

However, I was fitted up before dinner at the hospitable vicarage, and retired early; but only to have fitful dreams of some hiatus in the service—some attempt, Sisypheus-like, to get up the hill of difficulty, and ever rolling backwards—until I awoke during the small hours with a nervous headache. It was well to rise and draw out two skeleton sermons—sheet-anchors to stay this weak vessel from grinding against rocks ahead, or drifting into the Dead Sea of platitude. There *was* a Sunday delivery, but of course this particular morning the postman was unusually late, and I was on tenter-hooks. We had started to Pitchcombe, distant three miles, and the man was driving me in a magnified tub up the first hill when I espied the well-known uniform. Yes! there *was* a packet for me; the next moment the precious manuscript was in my hands, and the skeleton was relegated to the cupboard. Drive on, coachman, the tub has been lightened on my side.

At a time when services and celebrations are attended with such minute ceremonial and care, incidents which recall the easy-going days of our fathers are rare.

The church at C., rebuilt some fifty years ago, is lofty and spacious, with a massive tower, which like a hoary sentinel has watched the restless tide of humanity sink into silence at its feet nearly five hundred years. "The sweet church bells began to peal" at 10.30; but, when I arrive, ten minutes before service, weary with walking, all the doors are locked, and a sharp white frost forbids any rest on a tombstone. Icy cold without and within, where the commonest deal boxes tell a plain unvarnished tale, and one small stove with a long, black perpendicular pipe draws murky moisture from the roof, which drops in circular patches on the service books, and trickles down my neck. When the bell stops, one or two rustics saunter in, and a solitary farmer's family presents a bright little oasis in a desert of deal. The choir centres in a side pew behind a scarlet curtain, where a young woman presides at the harmonium with two sisters alone to vocalise; but at the second service the instrument is wheeled into the chancel, where another lady

plays and sings solo, three hymns and the usual chants—a performance ecclesiastically unique.

The arrangements for the celebration were equally primitive, and I whispered to the deaf old clerk :

“ I do not see the bread ? ”

“ Eh, sur ! ”

“ The bread, the bread ! ”

“ Oh, I chopped he up and put 'em in the cup.”

This would have suited the lax custom of the noted Dr. Drake, Rector of Langton some forty years ago. “ He would walk up the aisle of his church,” writes Lord Teignmouth, “ to the vestry, whistling and tapping his boot tops with his whip as he went along ; and when in good humour whispering, as he passed, to the ladies in the squire's pew, that he would give them a short sermon. He might be seen standing at the Lord's Table whistling audibly as he drew the cork from the bottle, whilst the few communicants were chiefly old people who attended solely to receive a share of the alms.”

Akin to Dr. Drake must have been that quaint rector in Somersetshire (where my genial friend Mr. F. lived), who was requested by his Bishop, at the instance of the churchwardens, to hold a second service in the parish church.

“ Want a second service do they,” growled the irate parson ; “ well, they shall not express this want after next Sunday.”

On that day there was the usual full service at eleven o'clock, before which the churchwardens almost regretted their presentment, the rector being so very cordial ; but what was their consternation after the benediction at 12.30 to hear him exclaim from the pulpit : — “ And now, my dear friends, in compliance with your ardent wish, and the request of our beloved Bishop, I will at once proceed to hold a second service, therefore, John ” (to the clerk below), “ toll the tenor bell.”

But to return to my former subject.

Anxiety from a different cause awaited me at the early celebration at All Saints, B., where everything is certainly done decently and in order. On that particular morning the master of the ceremonies forgot to appear. In vain the solitary bell clamoured, “ Sleepers, wake ! ” two æsthetic ladies alone responded, and I had to prepare the Holy Table, an easy matter in the days when “ a fair linen cloth sufficed,” but now, what with serviettes, veils, and other befringed and belaced appendages, somewhat puzzling.

The bread had been sent, but where was the wine ? Every nook in the vestry was searched in vain. Bottles, many, but wine, not any ; at least none beyond a sediment of what seemed like blue ink in one disused, dusty bottle of ancient date—odourless, flavourless. The bell-ringer had left, the ladies were waiting. “ Neck or nothing,” thought I, surveying the elongated bottle, and the service began. A few oily, half-congealed drops oozed out ; but I was by no means

sure until the service was over that I had not been administering poison.

After another celebration in the same town, where the church would seat 1200, and was attended by about twenty, I was reverently about to consume the wine as the rubric enjoins, when the curate eagerly stepped forward and said, "Please don't; we always put that back in the bottle."

The dear old incumbent, whose scant breath made any such exertion trying to his auditory as well as to himself, would persist in reading the Commandments. He got over the ground fairly well in the short ones, but was heavily handicapped with the second and fourth. The way he set his shoulders, and took a flying leap over several words in succession to avoid pulling up before reaching a full-stop, was startling. He was very old-fashioned too, and the use of the black gown was imperative; and, as I had to resume the surplice for the offertory, and the hymns before and after the sermon seemed singularly short, the on and off business was purely pantomimic. How I struggled and strained to get into a robe much too small. Shall I ever be in time, thought I, as the slits for the arms got hidden in the folds, and the back would not draw up without an alarming crack, and then I stiffened into the letter T.

Three months since; but now the kindly old man is dead, and altered days bring altered ways: "What shadows we are, what shadows we pursue."

Speaking of clerical robes, an amusing circumstance happened to my friend B., also an old-fashioned man, who knew nothing about the elaborate finery in which officiating clergymen array themselves. It was in Septuagesima, and he received especial instructions from the absent rector: "Be sure you wear the violet stole, or my people will be shocked."

Anything to oblige, thought B.

In a cold, dark vestry, without seat or mirror, he thrust his head through a superfine surplice which reached to his knees (he would never, he declared, disfigure himself by a cassock), and seeing on the table a long slip of blue silk, with elaborate ends and crosses, he put it on. A troop of choir-boys came in, and flattened him against some prickly decorations. How those boys did nudge and titter! "It's their nature," mused B.; but when he followed them up the nave, and blushed as all the folks stood up, he was conscious, from certain smiles and looks, that he was creating unusual interest. What could it be? Perhaps that horrid surplice was half-way up his back. He gave a violent tug; no! that was all right. Then he remembered an inclination of one of his limited locks to shoot up with peculiar effect; but he felt that was in repose. When at the lectern, the squire's family in front bit their lips and visibly shook, he saw all that at a glance, and was more puzzled than ever; but there was no explanation till luncheon.

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed the invalid rector, "you have been wearing those beautiful markers which Mrs. F., our squire's wife, presented last week! These I sent to the vestry, meaning Henry to put them in the large Bible before service."

Oh, the worth of a button! How often does one's hood slip under the chin, or get entangled with the arm, because buttons on surplices, like plates at afternoon teas, are not fashionable. At a High Church, recently, during the first hymn, I was surprised to see a finely-worked cross half-way down my stole without any corresponding design, and was puzzled at this one-sided symbolism, until I discovered that this cross had slipped from the back of my neck, and that I had been marching in procession with two feet of stole one side and four on the other.

From the Church to the Parsonage is an easy gradation; and my general experience of country rectories and vicarages is most agreeable. Pleasant people, generous hospitality, and kindly forethought—a home, in fact, away from home.

Yet there are occasions when I miss home comforts. How often do I view with alarm the very small dimensions of the bedstead in the guest-chamber! Always a wretched sleeper, I endeavour to stretch myself on a framework of iron about 3 feet by 5 feet 6 inches, scantily padded, which admits only of a cramped, doubled-up position, and of no turning without the loss of layers of blankets. I think of St. Lawrence on his gridiron; and, like Eugene Aram—

"All night I lay in agony  
From weary chime to chime,"

and bewail the fate which condemns a middle-aged man to bedsteads only fit for a Biffin or a boy.

"Hope you slept well, for that is my brother's favourite room," said my hostess during breakfast. He is a short Somersetshire man; I am six feet, so that I answered laconically, like the late Lord Aberdeen (who hated the sea), when about to cruise with the Royal family.

"The sea does not affect you very much?" suggested the Queen.

"Very much, Madam!"

"But you are not always ill, Lord Aberdeen?"

"Always, Madam!"

Then, again, although by no means a Sybarite, the diet now and then is somewhat trying. I have been led to associate one party in the Church with a cataract of tea and indigestible cold meat. At N. I always find a stringy, tough, cold bit of beef, which serves from the Saturday until the Monday, with the remnant of a bottle of whiskey, and well I remember, after a drive of five miles from the station, reaching B. Vicarage on the Saturday by two o'clock. The vicar was away courting, leaving the wife of a labourer in charge,

whose ideas of housekeeping were limited to hot tea and cold mutton. A roast shoulder at dinner was very acceptable, but when I was given the cold shoulder that night at supper, at three meals on the following day, and at breakfast on the Monday morning, it became rather too much of a good thing.

I always take certain flasks to fresh houses, not knowing what peculiarities may prevail, so that here I was not dependent on the tea-kettle. I found this provision especially useful at the small town of W., where a brand-new rector, inexperienced in all but his own crotchets, was red-hot on cold water, and rigorously lived up to the maxim, "After me the deluge." I had three full services, one being at a distance, with Lenten fare; so that when asked during my solitary supper, by the damsel in waiting, whether I would take cocoa, I replied:

"Have you any claret or other wine?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Any table beer?"

"Oh, dear no, sir! Master——"

"Well, have you such a thing as unadulterated warm water? because I will find the brandy!"

Exit damsel, petrified. Tableau!

The reference to cold mutton recalls anything but a sunny memory in Wiltshire, when, to my horror, I found myself one Saturday night in a remote vicarage in a nest of rigid, frigid Calvinists; and, as the very mention of that detestable dyspeptic is to me as the red rag to a bull, to hear the condemnation of all civilised theological thought from these pharisaical crones soon caused a fierce explosion, and I blew up with the dynamite of common-sense all their horrible conceptions. My unexpected thunder caused a sudden silence; and, as a punishment I suppose for the charity "which hopeth all things," at supper, whilst each of the elect was regaled with an egg, there was placed before me, with the stern mien of Mr. F.'s aunt, a joint of cold boiled neck of mutton, with a streak of lean no thicker than a halfpenny. This dose was repeated on the following night, when seeing that my hosts had no better manners than to inflict such a nauseating article, I exclaimed—"As I do not usually feast on mutton fat, I will take an egg."

That "Sawbath" was anything but a delight. We rose by candle-light, had family prayers at every meal, not a vegetable was allowed to be cooked, and conversation was chiefly confined to petty parochialities. The arrangements in the church were quite in harmony with Genevan simplicity. An oblong, whitewashed room, with gaunt beams crossing a nearly flat ceiling, and a varied assortment of deal boxes not over clean; whilst the font was actually fixed within the chancel rails. Anything less ecclesiastical it would be difficult to conceive. I read prayers twice, a visitor read the lessons, with prefaces certainly not to be found in the "use of Sarum." During



these lessons I had to sit on a small camp-stool, so wretchedly rickety that I grasped the adjoining seat, expecting a downfall every moment. I knew that the venerable vicar took several shots at me during his lengthy sermons when he was "five feet above contradiction,"

"Dropping buckets into empty wells,  
And growing old in drawing nothing up ;"

but "the man with the awful views" was case-hardened, and they did no harm. Next morning, what a sense of relief when the rattle-trap bore me away from this perpetual nightmare, and I felt once again the fresh free air of heaven.

In alluding to diet, why will ladies at these country parsonages spoil good food by selecting inefficient and juvenile cooks. There are my hospitable friends at C., most comfortable of vicarages, prettiest of churches, the centre of a model village and beneficent interests. When last there I was shown literally a prodigy in petticoats, for the young lady had not taken to long dresses.

"This is our cook," said Miss B. triumphantly : "the most regular attendant at the Sunday-school, and she has also passed the highest standard."

My dread of such literary qualifications was justified. Oh, those sausages, either like beetroot or sticks of liquorice ; those eggs as hard as billiard balls, or so liquified as to run all over the table in search of the parent hen. Transparent tea with leaves all afloat : opaque coffee which one has strong grounds for associating with an iron spoon and stale sediment. The leg of mutton with an ebony outside concealing a deep strata of vermillion—"Just a leetle underdone, my love ;" the tepid apple-pie with solid crust to prove there is nothing like leather, and apples flying off at a tangent when the fork pressed them into service. Thick toast too, with a small circle of brown set in a broad margin of white, and left flat on the kitchen table to toughen at leisure. What can be expected of a rustic maiden not in her teens but a hash.

Another source of discomfort to a painfully precise old bachelor is unpunctuality ; so greatly on the increase. By no means a solitary experience was that at N., where the young vicar, a regular son of Anak, arranged to meet me in his dining-room the following morning precisely at a quarter to eight, to accompany me to early celebration at eight o'clock. I waited in the fireless room as the precious minutes glided by : and at five minutes to eight I was hurried up the steepest of hills to the church, threw on a surplice, and breathless tried to read the exhortation, but halves of sentences came in spasmodic gasps, and I realised the old nightmare of oppressive struggling to shout, and a collapse into a whisper ; in fact, I was made thoroughly uncomfortable. Then again, why did that kind-hearted vicar of P. keep me on the worry early last Easter morn by rummaging overhead for the unfindable when the time was nearly up, and I had no oppoi-

tunity in the transit of ascertaining a dozen things connected with my part in the service.

Some men are born five minutes late, and never overtake it. Frequently too, am I told overnight, "We will have breakfast exactly at half-past eight, because you must start to the station at nine."

Monday morning comes, I enter the room as the time-piece chimes the half-hour: the fire is scarcely alight; the windows open to admit the hoar frost; the chairs are turned topsy-turvy; the table is bare; the housemaid dusting vigorously. I feel with Paul Pry, "I hope I don't intrude?" not knowing where to stand or sit. Presently the lady rushes in.

"So sorry! can't think how I overslept myself this particular morning: my husband will be down directly: Jane, we won't have prayers; bring in the breakfast; let me see, you like your eggs well set."

Enter husband reading the morning's letters.

"Can't think how it happened, but that clock must be fast; it wants seventeen minutes to nine: where is the tea-caddy?"

The meal is served a few minutes before nine, when my hostess remembers—

"My dear, did you order the carriage for this morning?"

"Yes! but I don't think I mentioned the hour. I say, Jane, just tell Stokes to bring it round at once."

Swindon-like, ten minutes allowed for refreshment; the next ten anxiously waiting in the hall the arrival of Tommy, warranted not to exceed five miles an hour. I hurriedly exchange adieus, not comforted by the assurance, "that train is always late." The road has been relaid in places: the low four-wheel proceeds by snatches and halts, and Tommy does not believe in steam. There are only two trains in the day to B., and the prospect of six hours' penance at the rough shanty called H. station is not exhilarating. Ziz-zag down that last hill, I dread seeing in the distance the line of steam from the advancing train; but no! when we arrive a quarter of an hour late the ticket office is not open. One or two passengers saunter in: a luggageer leisurely puffs up and down the single line of rails till pausing to get breath in a siding: and when there is nothing more to be done a happy thought strikes Master Velveteen, who rings a bell, and we are told that our train has actually left the previous stopping-place.



## A SWARM OF BEES.

WE had been expecting the thing for weeks, yet, when it did at last happen, it took us by surprise. Forewarned, it would seem, in spite of that well-seasoned proverb, is not always forearmed.

It happened, too, on a most inconvenient day.

The weather, even for June, was unusually warm.

Then the proof-sheets of a certain cherished pamphlet had arrived that morning, and I was very busy making corrections in the coolest and quietest room in the house—my study—when, disregarding my express desire for solitude, in rushed Amanda, and flung herself into my arms, gasping inarticulately.

Her agitation was so great that I refrained from any sign of displeasure at the way in which my papers were scattered and crushed.

"Oh!" she panted, clutching me round the throat so tightly that I felt for one awful moment that my "Essay on Free Labour and the Trades Unions" would never be published—"Oh! they have come out, and are getting into the apple-tree. Make haste—do make haste, and stop them."

"The children getting into the apple-tree?" I shouted. "Why didn't *you* stop them?"

I made haste as directed and hurried towards the garden, but had only reached the door when my Amanda stopped me to say—

"You are even sillier than I thought." (This savoured of a revelation.) "Of course it is not the children, but the bees. O the bees! John started an hour ago to Colehampton Fair—what shall we do?"

I ran towards the apple-tree: there was the swarm flying round it, and forming into a huge cluster, which hung from a branch.

I felt helpless beside their noisy activity, but, collecting my wits, hurried back to the house in search of "Every Man his own Apiarist," and "Bee-keeping for Amateurs."

I had barely reached the door when Amanda, who had been watching from a safe distance, shrieked, "There they go, they are off again!" and fled to the back regions to call Betty.

I remained glued to the spot with horror, as they went over into the next garden, but I was destined to receive even greater shocks.

From my elegant little bijou residence, as my landlord sweetly describes it, emerged two such beings as I could never have dreamt of seeing there. An enormous sun-bonnet graced the head of the first, over which was drawn her entire over-skirt; the second sported my Sunday hat, which covered her head and face, being tilted up at intervals to allow its wearer to use her eyes: over this a large kitchen-

apron was fastened, the rest of the get-up in both cases was quite in keeping. One carried the dinner-gong which she thumped loudly with a heavy hammer; the other performed an equally deafening tattoo with one of my priceless bronzes on a kitchen tray.

It was in vain I challenged them, it was impossible to hear a human voice above the din, and I had to stand back; as the figure in the silk hat raised it for an instant, I recognised to my horror my wife!

They marched without hesitation, apparently inspired by their deafening clamour, straight to the garden wall over which the bees had disappeared, and the heroine in the sun-bonnet, to my utter disgust and consternation, placed a ladder against it and went over; my dainty and usually somewhat helpless Amanda followed her under my very eyes.

"My love," I shouted, "the Wilsons' garden! you are surely not going into it—and like that!"

I might as well have whispered to an express train; they had gone over; and being left alone, I, too, scaled the wall and looked over.

The bees were again in a cluster, this time on the branch of a choice French rose lately planted by my neighbour, a botanical maniac. Beside it stood my wife and servant, beating violently as before.

Down the path came the whole family of Wilson, followed by their household, the head of the house tearing his hair at sight of the precious standard. I fancied I caught sentences such as "unwarrantable intrusion," "disgraceful commotion," "police;" but neither apiarist deigned the slightest attention, and the overpowering noise of their weapons protected them.

Finally the indignant crowd was forced to disperse. I beckoned wildly to my neighbour, in hopes of being able to explain and apologise, but in vain; nothing could be heard, and I was about to descend and forcibly remove my wife, at least, when the beating suddenly ceased, and after a short parley with Betty, Amanda came towards the ladder, climbing up a tasteful rockery to reach the top of the wall.

She stopped at sight of me.

"That is just like you," she said, her remark developing into a shout as Betty again commenced beating the gong, "just like you to sit there and watch while I kill myself getting the bees to settle. Who will eat the most honey, I wonder? Will you go into the garden and beat this tray, or go to the village and get young Simmonds to come and take them? Quick, choose! there is no time to waste: we must take them, or they may be off again."

Of two evils always choose the least.

"I will go to the village," I said.

"Go then," she cried, "here is your hat;" and such an influence has woman over man, that I instantly went, and had reached the

Simmonds' house before I realised, helped thereto considerably by the astonished gaze of the entire community, that I had come out without a coat, and in my silk hat!

I have never been respected in the village since. Some say I am mad, and others—it is too painful.

To fetch Simmonds home and see him coolly enter the Wilsons' garden, carrying the patent hive which I handed to him, was the work of the next half-hour. I understand that when bees swarm any such trespass is allowable—so Amanda says. Betty and John are her authorities, but I call it impertinence.

I went into my house, for my throat was so dry I had scarcely been able to speak to Simmonds, and was just about to enjoy a well-earned glass of cider, when the cry of my helpless little ones smote my ear.

With the gloomiest forebodings I rushed to the garden, following the direction of the cries, and found the baby, who had been crawling on the grass when the bees came out, with his head through the lattice-work of the summer-house.

The lattice is small and the baby's head large, and it was some time before I could release him; having done so I carried him, still screaming, into the house, and succeeded in pacifying him with a cake and all the drawing-room ornaments at hand. My search for the nurse was useless, as this woman, who is afflicted with "nerves," had had the audacity to retire to a neighbour's house in a fit of hysterics on seeing the bees. This I learned afterwards.

Meanwhile I searched the house, and was rewarded by finding our eldest hope, aged three, employing his leisure in drawing representations of men, dogs and horses, in the highest style of nursery art, on some loose sheets of paper which strewed the floor.

There were more howls after that. As I collected my spoiled proof-sheets I do not know whether Dicky or I made the most noise.

Depositing both children in safety on a plot of grass, I again mounted the ladder, and looking over, was astounded to see a crowd, principally of children and old people, collected in the paddock which bounded my neighbour's garden. Mr. Wilson and the police were trying to disperse them, for some time with small success. They had heard the sound of melody from their houses, and came to listen, as they hoped, to a brass band, a rare treat in our isolated village. Although at first disappointed, they were good-natured enough to take a lively interest in our proceedings, and it was not until Simmonds shook the bees skilfully into the hive and covered them up, and, heaving a great sigh, exclaimed, "Them'll do now," it was not till then, I say, that the spectators retired, leaving my wife at last free to return to her ordinary occupations.

I was thankful to observe that she no longer thought it necessary to climb over the rockery, but walked round to the gate like a reasonable being.

I went round to meet her, and overheard Wilson, who looked quieter now, telling the policeman that he had changed his mind, and did not intend to send me a summons, as he found his trees quite uninjured. In answer to my apologies he said that he was willing for this once to overlook the inconvenient disturbances of the morning, and we parted on fairly good terms.

Peace and harmony reigned again, and I could scarcely have realised that I had not been suffering from nightmare, had I not been convinced by the dilapidated state of the gong and Amanda's tears over the Dresden broken by the baby. My bronze inkstand too was missing, and cannot be traced.

Taking it all round I began to think we were paying rather dearly for our honey, and was just about to confide this view of the case to Amanda, who, with infinite patience and "coaguline" was patching up a still smiling little shepherdess, when Betty ran in almost crying.

"Oh, sir! ma'am! the bees be gone again. Simmonds left them all right, and now there is not one left, and he met a boy who saw a swarm an hour ago over to Farmer Withycombe's, so they'll perhaps be gone miles by now. 'Tis a terrible pity."

It was but too true, and though the faithful Simmonds wearied body and mind in the subsequent search, our swarm is still missing.

I suggested to Amanda, over the tea-cups, that in future, bees being so troublesome and expensive, we should depend for our honey on more fortunate or more experienced bee-keepers, but Amanda shook her head and was silent; and I know what that means.

NORAH M'CORMICK.





## TOM PUCKLE: THE COMMONPLACE.

ACCORDING to a well-known writer the man who has best served his generation is not the man who has done the most "good," or the man who has set the finest moral example, but the man who has made the most happiness for his neighbour. So, in presenting Tom Puckle to the public I make no apology for his one talent of good-nature. I have called him commonplace, and so he was; commonplace in appearance, with his dumpy figure and seraphic smile; and commonplace in mind to judge from the monotony of his conversation, and his ever ready interest in petty topics. Perhaps it was a clear case of circumstances making the man, for his life had been very uneventful.

"You have no heart line!" a pretty palmist told him at one of those dull drawing-room "crushes," when everyone talks to the wrong person or is absorbed in watching his opportunity of escape.

"Perhaps somebody has effaced it for me!" he answered, laughing into her blue eyes; and she made up her mind that whatever people said about his stupidity he was equal to as good a flirtation as any man.

But that was not one of his pastimes; he always declared he was much too busy arranging others' love-affairs to have any of his own. People involuntarily confided in him, and thrust upon him the most risky situations. Anxious mothers implored him to find out the morals of every aspirant to their daughters' hands; and love-sick hysterical boys paced his room half the night in frenzied suspense or despair. At the age of forty he was still living in two rooms without a relative in the world to claim his society. He was a commercial man, and his income of five hundred pounds a year covered his expenses and left him at the end of each without a debt; but his worst enemy, if he had one, never called him mean, he had never been known to desert a friend or to fail in helping the lame dog over the stile. He gave his little dinners and whist parties, and was a popular diner out.

"A table wants as much padding as anything else," he used to say with his good-natured smile, "and people are so kind they always call upon me to make up their number."

This is just what he thought had happened to him one night at the Barrows. His place was in the middle of a long table between two of the plainest old primms he had ever seen. Before the dinner was half over he found he was in the same predicament as the man who couldn't open his mouth without putting his foot into it. Their severe glances and stiff narrowing of the shoulders denounced him for the world, the flesh, and the devil; and he was not at all sure when

he nearly choked himself over a joke he happened to catch from the far end of the table that they did not think him intoxicated.

What was his consternation, then, the next morning when he got into an omnibus in Piccadilly to find he encountered them again, and to overhear such remarks as—"Here comes that horrid little man!" "Nasty little fright, I hope he won't sit next to me!" So he sat opposite to them with a miserably dejected look on his fat, rosy face, till the charity of one of them prompted her to jerk out her hand and her recognition,

"Did we not have the pleasure of meeting you last night?"

"Delighted to see you again," he beamed. "Can I be of any service to you?"

There was a passage of whispers, and at last a piece of paper was put into his hands bearing an address.

"West Kensington is a very perplexing locality," he said; "you'd better let me conduct you there."

More passage of whispers and it was agreed.

He got on capitally after that, and found all the right things to say.

They stopped at Edith Road, and each accepting an arm, the little ladies were piloted across the road.

"Now kind Mr. Puckle," one of them said, "we will tell you we are going to see a niece of ours who is in terrible trouble, and we may have to bring her away with us. Is there a cab to be got about here at a minute's notice?"

Puckle thought for a moment; he was used to these emergencies, and he made up his mind to act in this one.

"I'll tell you what," he said, "the best plan will be for me to get a cab and wait for you a few doors down the road, then there won't be any difficulty. Where are you going to drive to?"

"We are lodging in Sloane Square."

"All right. Here we are, Lisgar Gardens; which is your number? Very well, I'll be ready."

After some difficulty he got a cab, and drove up quickly to the spot; but there was no sign of the little ladies, and he got through two cigars before he saw the door open. The girl was with them, thickly veiled, but he saw she walked firmly towards him and bent her head a little proudly as she gave him the bag she carried. He shut the door after them, and was lifting his hat when the little women fluttered out,

"Oh, Mr. Puckle, if you *would* come too! Cabs are so dangerous!"

"By all means," he answered, jumping in and sitting next to the girl.

"Is it not taking up this gentleman's time, Aunt Deborah?" she said in a low voice that sounded strangely sweet to him.

"I've nothing in the world to do," he replied quickly; "it will fill up my morning for me."

They drove in silence. And he was certain that the girl at his side was suffering acutely ; her hand was pressed continually to her side, and once as they rattled over some stones he heard her groan.

"You are not well," he said kindly, and before they knew what he was about he had slipped off his overcoat and rolled it into a pillow for her.

"If I could only get more air," she gasped, hurrying off her gloves and throwing up her veil. He dashed down the window, regardless of Aunt Deborah's cough, and he noticed two things, that the girl was very beautiful and that she wore a wedding-ring.

"We are nearly there now," he said ; "I am afraid you are suffering ?"

She gave him a quick, scrutinising look.

"You are very kind," she answered, and closed her eyes.

Aunt Deborah, who always took the initiative, leant forward and whispered :

"She has been travelling night and day alone and in dreadful trouble."

"Poor child," he said gently ; "poor child."

He helped them out and half carried the girl into the house. When they had laid her on the sofa he withdrew, asking to be allowed to call the next day. Miss Deborah still retained his hand.

"I don't know what to do," she said. "Mr. Barrow is out of town and we have no male relative."

"Let me help you if I can," he answered ; "if you can trust me ?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sure we can ; but you are a stranger. We are trespassing."

"Please don't think that : I never was a stranger to anybody. Tom Puckle is a stupid fellow, I know, but he has mixed with the world long enough to know its ways."

"Come in here, then," she said, opening a side door that led into their little dining room. She talked and cried for half an hour, poor Miss Deborah, she was such a tender-hearted soul. And he would not hurry her a bit. He tried to get a clear idea of the case, and what he made out was that when the child was born the father had basely deserted his wife and had not been heard of for months.

"She stayed in Canada as long as her money held out, but when the baby died there was nothing for it but to come back to us, and by the kindness of her friends she managed to scrape the money together for her passage. We did not know it was so bad as all this till this morning."

Aunt Deborah sobbed.

He took her hand gently between his.

"Try and tell me," he said, "the name of this dev——man, and how long he has been at this place."

"He is a Captain Sparrow, but I don't know anything about his ship or that."

It was little to go upon, but Tom Puckle was not easily baulked.

He came every evening and brought a wonderful cheer with him. Daisy Sparrow began to look upon his visit as the one bright spot in the dreary day, and she would sit watching his ugly, kind face till her own would brighten for the passing moment. He took them for drives in the parks, and he brought her the first red roses of the summer. She held them for a minute close to her breast and kissed them passionately. Puckle's eyes filled, and there was an odd sensation about his heart.

"You are fond of flowers," he said ; "or do they only bring you painful memories?"

She laid them down and blushed a little.

"No, I have no sentimental associations with flowers. I only love them for themselves, and because they seem full of the kindness of the world, and I have never had very much." She held out her hand. "But you are the kindest man I ever met."

"Oh, am I really?" he said foolishly, and he laughed as he pressed her hand and took his leave. He walked home feeling charged with electricity. But when he had sent away his dinner and drank an extra glass of wine he grew serious, and a guilty look came into his simple blue eyes.

"This won't do, Tom!" he ejaculated, pulling himself together. "If you fall in love with that girl there'll be the deuce to pay."

He began to wish she had not got such sweet, pathetic eyes, and quite such a thrilling voice. Perhaps it would be better not to think of her at all. Then he remembered she had expressed a wish to read a book he had mentioned, and he took down his hat again and went out to buy it.

One day he told them he was going away on business and might not be back for some days. It was the end of the autumn and Daisy was sitting shivering over the fire. She looked up quickly with troubled eyes.

"Oh, must you go? We shall miss you so much. And I am going away so soon myself."

"Daisy!" the little ladies cried.

"Yes, dear aunts, I can't live for ever on your charity, I must find something to do."

"Will you wait till I come back," he asked, "before you take any decided step? I may bring you some news."

"Are you going on my account?" she cried, springing to her feet. "You shall not! Let him send for me if he wants me. I won't go until he does!" she added fiercely.

Tom Puckle started, and then he came quite close to her and looked in her eyes.

"Did not you *love* him once?"

She shuddered.

"Never; I married him to save my only brother from ruin."

"And he?"

"Is dead."

There was a long silence. Then she said, and she was very pale :

"What have you heard? Tell me everything."

"Your husband is most likely on his way to England. I am going to Southampton to meet the vessel that he is supposed to be sailing in. Can you trust me absolutely?"

"Absolutely!"

The next day she received a telegram—"Your husband is dying. *He does not ask for you.*" But of course she went. A woman's sense of duty is stronger than she imagines. And trembling little Aunt Deborah followed by the next train.

"Our Mr. Puckle would take care of her, I know," she said to her sister, "but one must consider what the world is likely to say."

All was over when she got there. Handsome, reckless, selfish George Sparrow would never trouble his fellow-sinners again.

"The wicked are only poor blind people who have missed their way," somebody says. But, as a critic marked the other day against a passage in Stevenson's 'Christmas Sermon,' before lending it to me, "A. has as good a right to go to the devil as we to go to glory."

"Yes," wrote my friend, "if he goes *alone*." That is just the rub.

Captain Sparrow did not leave his wife a penny, and Tom Puckle paid the hotel bill and all the expenses of the funeral. In her flurry to take Daisy back with her, Aunt Deborah did not think about it, and the girl took them all by surprise when she met him on his return with a ten-pound note in her hand.

"I have sold my jewels," she said; "is this enough to pay you?"

He drew back, hurt to the quick.

"Oh, she cried, "I did not mean I could pay you for your kindness!"

"But you would deprive me of doing a common duty by a fellow-man."

She crushed the note in her hand and threw it in the fire. He smiled.

"Have you any plans?" he asked her presently.

"Yes; Aunt Deborah's friends, the Barrows, are going to let me teach their children."

"Will that be agreeable?"

"I think so," she answered wearily; "it is better than nothing. I go to-morrow."

"Then this is good-bye," he said, trying to command his voice; "I am going away too. The company are sending me to India for two years."

"Oh, dear Mr. Puckle," the little ladies cried with genuine distress in their voices, "we shall miss your kind, cheery face dreadfully!"

"Thank you," he said, kissing their hands. "And have *you* one word of regret to give me?" he added, turning to Daisy.

She was silent, but she gave him both her hands, and if he had not been so commonplace, poor Tom Puckle, he would have known her silence was the best hope he could have received.

He had been out his two years and was on the verge of returning, when Aunt Deborah, who had written him from time to time sweet, old-fashioned letters, sent him at last the long-expected blow.

*"Daisy is receiving marked attentions from John Woodward, the artist, and the Barrows are delighted. Poor dear child! Maria and I hoped at one time—but old women should not be match-makers, and as I have always told her, you looked upon her just as a father might."*

Tom groaned. What should he do? It would be unbearable to see her the wife of another again. And yet he must see her once more.

So it was that one evening in the late spring he overtook her in the Park, where he had been directed to follow her, and began at once to congratulate her in his clumsy way.

"Will you never marry, yourself?" she asked, looking through the distant trees.

"I? No! Why, who'd take a commonplace fellow like me? I only look on at these things. Tell me, Daisy, do you love this man with all your heart?"

"No, I don't; and what is more, I have never said I would marry him—he is too intense—I—I prefer something 'commonplace.'"

"Daisy, you don't mean——"

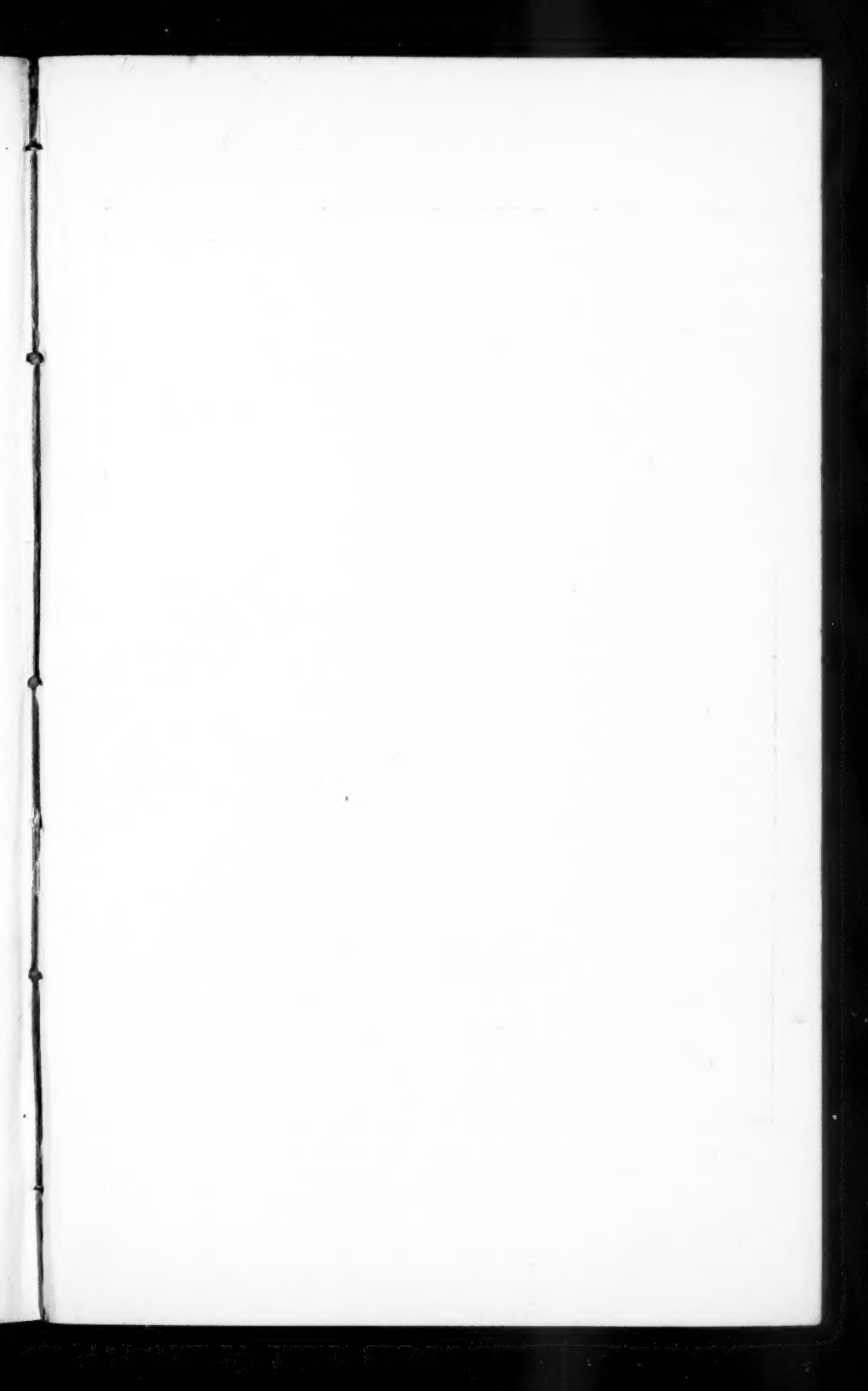
"Yes, I do!" she sobbed, turning her flushed face to his. "I have been so miserable without you—don't leave me again!"

And it was not to be wondered, considering how startled he was, that he took her in his arms then and there and kissed her beautiful lips.

LILIAN STREET.









BY THE TIME TEA WAS OVER, THE SISTERS HAD DISCOVERED THAT THEIR FIRST  
AND NOT ALTOGETHER FLATTERING ESTIMATE OF LADY PELL  
WAS QUITE AN ERRONEOUS ONE.